

Hizbollah chief blasts United States over terrorism report

BEIRUT (AP) — The head of the Islamic movement Hizbollah, branded a terrorist group in a U.S. State Department report, said it was America that was the biggest terrorist nation in the world.

"The U.S. administration considers anyone that does not follow its policy a terrorist," Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hizbollah, told a rally of about 10,000 people.

The U.S. State Department's annual report on terrorism issued Thursday listed Iran as the world's "most active" sponsor of terrorism and of planning and executing terrorist acts through surrogates, such as the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah.

"We reject America's self-designation of the leadership of mankind... and say in return

that the United States of America is the sponsor of terrorism. Moreover, it is the most terrorist country in the whole world," Sheikh Nasrallah said.

Hizbollah has led the fight to try to oust Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and Sheikh Nasrallah said this objective cannot be called terrorism.

"Hizbollah is a terrorist group because, according to the report, it is fighting the Israeli occupation army and its proxy militia.

"We are terrorist because we are fighting an occupation army and its militia," Sheikh Nasrallah told the rally in the Bir Al Abed suburb south of Beirut.

The rally was to commemorate the martyrdom of the

Muslim leader, Imam Hussein, in a battle in southern Iraq during a dispute over the leadership of Islam. Hussein, a grandson of Prophet Mohammad, was killed by rivals along with 70 followers.

Hizbollah, or Party of God, has been fighting 1,500 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 allied militiamen of the South Lebanon Army in an Israeli-occupied enclave in South Lebanon that occupies nearly one-tenth of the country.

Israel first invaded Lebanon in 1978 to push back Palestinian guerrillas, then returned in 1982 to again rout the Palestinians, only to bog down in battles with Lebanese guerrillas, primarily the Hizbollah.

Today, fighters of Hizbollah attack Israel's occupying soldiers almost daily.



PROTEST IN MOROCCO: A Moroccan TV journalist holding a picture of King Hassan II and draped in the Moroccan flag Monday is restrained by firemen as he tries to hang himself from the building that houses the national press union in Rabat in protest against social injustice in his field (AFP photo)

Egyptian security court confirms death sentences of Islamists

CAIRO (AP) — An Egyptian court on Monday confirmed death sentences issued against two Islamists, including Mustafa Hamza, who tops Egypt's most-wanted list.

The Supreme State Security Court also sentenced three defendants to life in prison at hard labour and 11 others to prison terms of up to 15 years. Six defendants were acquitted.

One of the defendants, 14-year-old Omar Qutb Raghbi, was sentenced to five years in prison.

For Hamza, who was tried and sentenced in absentia, it was the third death sentence issued against him.

Hamza, believed to be living in Afghanistan, is among Egypt's most wanted Islamists. He was convicted

in 1992 and 1993 cases and has been accused of having a role in the 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia.

Also sentenced to death was Sa'id Abdul Hakim Mustafa, who was in the courtroom.

The prisoners welcomed the verdicts with cheers and unfurled a banner saying: "We ask God to be martyrs. Another banner read: 'Wait for us, you the judges of injustice, when we will build palaces out of your skulls and turn rivers into blood.'"

The death sentences were handed down last month, but had to be confirmed after review by Egypt's mufti, Nasr Farid Wasel.

The government's chief cleric must endorse death

penalties before they are final.

The defendants were convicted of belonging to the outlawed Al Gamaa Al Islamiya, or the Islamic group, attempting to incite civil unrest and attacking tourists, police and government officials.

The Islamic group has been blamed for much of the violence in a six-year campaign by Islamists to overthrow Egypt's secular government and replace it with strict Islamic rule.

More than 1,200 people have died in the violence, most of them police and Islamists.

Monday's sentencing marked the third time this year that Egyptian courts have handed down death sentences against Islamists.

Iran releases four Palestinians

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran released four Palestinians, imprisoned since their capture during the 1980-88 war with Iraq, at the request of the visiting leader of the Hamas group, the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported Monday.

The prisoners, who fought for Iraq in the war, later met with Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the Hamas founder who is on a week-long visit to Tehran, the agency said.

Sheikh Yassin thanked Iran's supreme leader, Ayatol-

lah Ali Khamenei, and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami for securing release of the Palestinian prisoners, it said.

Sheikh Yassin's visit was the first public trip to Iran by a leader of the Palestinian organisation.

IRNA said the Palestinians would be reunited with the families in the next few days, but did not say where. Their names were not given.

The London-headquartered Al Hayat daily said the Palestinians would be sent to Iraq. The report could not be con-

firmed independently.

Sheikh Yassin, a 61-year-old quadriplegic, arrived last Tuesday and was expected to leave Monday for Syria.

He earlier visited Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar and also is due to visit Pakistan and Malaysia.

Iran and Hamas reject the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. They contend the pacts will not lead to the return of occupied Palestinian land and want Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to return to armed struggle.

Pro-Iraq Egyptian party files lawsuit against London, Washington

CAIRO (AFP) — A pro-Iraqi, anti-Western Egyptian party on Monday filed a lawsuit against the United States and Britain, demanding \$180 million in compensation for their hostility towards Iraq.

The leader of the Misr Al Fata (Young Egypt), Al Wassef Eid Al Wassef, in a petition to a Cairo court demanded "S180 million for the governments of Egypt and Iraq as compensation from the United States and Britain."

Mr. Wassef stressed that his request "falls in line with international law and the Egyptian penal code."

The compensation money would be split evenly between Cairo and Baghdad and "represents the same amount of money which the United States and Britain are

demanding from the Arab Gulf states to finance [Western] troop dispatches" to the Gulf region at the end of last year, Mr. Wassef said.

"Recent British and U.S. troop build-ups in the Gulf have heavily undermined the economies of regional countries, including Egypt, because they dissuaded tourists and investors from coming."

"This gives Cairo and Baghdad the right to be compensated," Mr. Wassef said.

Mr. Wassef said his demand for compensation became more pressing after the U.N. Security Council last week renewed sanctions against Baghdad "under U.S. and British pressure."

A verdict is expected next week.

South Lebanon ceasefire meeting underway

NAQOURA (AFP) — International monitors met here Monday to discuss 10 complaints of south Lebanon ceasefire violations lodged by the Lebanese and the Israelis, officials said.

The international monitoring panel convened at 11:00 a.m. at the headquarters of the U.N. peacekeeping force in the coastal town of Naqoura near the Lebanese-Israeli border, the officials said.

Lebanon has filed six complaints over Israeli shelling that wounded five civilians, including three children, according to the Lebanese delegation.

Among the injured children was a two-year-old girl who previously had both legs amputated after an Israeli bombardment in April 1996.

Israel lodged four complaints, accusing guerrillas of Hizbollah movement of launching attacks from residential areas.

According to the terms of the 1996 truce between Israel and Hizbollah, attacks may not be launched from civilian areas, nor may they target civilians.

AIDS victims, relatives sue Iran's blood transfusion organisation

TEHRAN (AFP) — A number of Iranians infected with the AIDS virus through blood transfusion and their relatives have filed a suit against Iran's Blood Transfusion Organisation (IBTO), a newspaper reported Monday.

Hearings began in the case at a special court in Tehran, where three women, five men, four adolescents and two children appeared along with a number of IBTO officials, Resalat newspaper said.

An elderly man complained that his 24-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter had died of AIDS after being injected with blood provided by the organisation, it said.

Another plaintiff said he and his brother, both haemophiliacs, had been infected with the Human Immune-Deficiency Virus (HIV), which can lead to AIDS, after receiving domestically-produced blood.

"My brother has already died, leaving his family without a source of income," said the man, who was not identified.

An elderly woman who

had developed full-blown AIDS following a blood transfusion said her "reputation is all destroyed" and called for the culprits to be given the "maximum punishment."

A mother said two of her children, both haemophiliacs, had also developed AIDS after receiving blood.

They all blamed the IBTO and the health ministry for their plight and complained that no insurance company or government agency was prepared to pay for their treatment.

According to official figures, around 1,230 Iranians, mostly intravenous drug users, have been diagnosed as carriers of the HIV virus, 186 of whom have developed full-blown Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

A total of 155 people have died of the disease.

The first case of the disease was recorded in 1985, a one-year-old baby who received a transfusion of imported blood.

The Iranian authorities have banned blood imports since then.

Maimed Hizbollah member tells of Israeli bombing mission

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A Lebanese man severely maimed while preparing an anti-Israeli bomb attack in an Arab east Jerusalem hotel in April 1996 said Sunday he was a Hizbollah member and that he did not regret his actions.

Hussein Migdad — who lost his right leg and an arm — told Israel's Channel Two television that he was a member of the Lebanese Hizbollah group which had given him a stolen British passport to help him launch the attack.

"My mission was to send a message to the Israeli army to make them stop its shelling and

occupation of Lebanon," said Mr. Migdad, who refused to express misgivings for the mission.

Channel Two said Mr. Migdad planned a spectacular bomb attack in Tel Aviv and that he had been given explosives by two contacts in Arab east Jerusalem.

It said he had arrived in Tel Aviv from Zurich, and that he had managed to pass through Swiss and Israeli customs carrying detonators to be used in an attack.

Mr. Migdad said he had no idea what happened when his room at Arab east Jerusalem's Lawrence Hotel was destroyed

by a bomb explosion on April 12, causing him the severe injuries.

But the television said two clients in adjoining rooms of the hotel mysteriously disappeared minutes before the blast.

An Israeli anti-terrorism official refused to say whether Mr. Migdad had been set up with a booby-trapped device.

The television report also accused the Iranian embassy in Beirut of funding the attack and providing the stolen British passport in the name of Andrew Charles Jonathan Newman.

Mr. Migdad is currently still in custody in an Israeli military hospital.

Turkish court sends scandal case back to parliament

ISTANBUL (AP) — A state security court on Monday threw the case of a key figure in a scandal over ties between the state and the underworld back to the parliament.

The court said it has no jurisdiction over senior government officials such as former Turkish Interior Minister Mehmet Agar.

The decision means parliament will have to reopen the investigation and vote on whether Agar's case should be sent instead to the supreme court.

The new inquiry could take at least two months.

Parliament lifted Agar's legislative immunity in December along with another deputy, Sedat Bucak, also accused in the case. In February, he was charged forming a criminal gang, hiding a fugitive and abusing his powers. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Agar was accused of using his position as the nation's police chief to help terrorists and hitmen involved in gangland killings. Bucak, who heads a pro-govern-

ment Kurdish militia, was accused of covering up drug and gun smuggling. Bucak faces up to 20 years in prison. He is also accused of possessing a large number of weapons, including machine guns.

The two deputies are the most prominent figures implicated in a wide-ranging, state-underworld scandal that came to light after a 1996 car crash.

The accident killed a fugitive terrorist and a police chief, injured Bucak and raised questions about why all three men were travelling in the same car.

Turkish president travels to Tunisia

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish President Suleiman Demirel set out Monday for a 48-hour official visit to Tunisia at the invitation of his Tunisian counterpart, Zelin Ali Abidine Ben Ali. "Tunisia is the Arab country which most resembles Turkey from the point of view of its social institutions," Mr. Demirel said in an airport statement before leaving. Mr. Demirel is accompanied by a large delegation of businessmen as well as several government ministers, and the two sides are expected to strengthen political and economic relations during the visit.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Five Egyptians hanged for murder
CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian prison authorities on Sunday executed by hanging five men convicted of killing a teenager, a jeweller and a baker in separate attacks, the government press reported on Monday. Hussein Abdul Zaher had been found guilty of kidnapping and killing Amr Abdul Razak in 1990 after sexually abusing him. His crime completed, he set the boy's corpse on fire, newspapers said.

Palestinians get \$25 million U.N. loan
RAMALLAH (AFP) — A U.N. agriculture agency has agreed to loan the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) \$25 million to help develop small-scale farming, Palestinian officials said Monday. Representatives of the International Agricultural Fund and Palestinian Finance Minister Mohammad Nashashibi were due to sign the loan agreement at a ceremony Monday night in Ramallah, a spokesman for Mr. Nashashibi said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO
15:10Cartoon — Pro Stars
16:10 Small Talk — "Quiz Show"
16:00Drama Borderown
16:30 Doc. — The Health Show
17:00Route of Capricorn
18:00French Programme
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:35 Step by Step — "Three Girls and Baby"
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Drama — Rhodes
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "Dr. Giggles"
23:59Metro Cafe
00:30End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:16Fajr
05:42(Sunrise) Doha
12:32Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:23Maghreb
20:49Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
The effect of the heat wave will continue for three days more where it will be hot and dry with temperatures higher than average by ten degrees centigrade. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be hot, dry, and dusty, winds southerly moderate to active, and sea calm.

Amman18/35
Aqaba23/40
Deserts15/36
Jordan Valley24/42

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 36, Aqaba 39 Humidity readings: Amman 15 per cent, Aqaba 22 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah 5820425
Dr. Wissam Hazyim 748563
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyir 4620115
Dr. Munther Al Qraini 779959

FERDOWS PHARMACY778336
Al Asema pharmacy4637055
Al Salam pharmacy4636730
Yacoub pharmacy4641945
Shmeisani pharmacy4637660
Nairoukh pharmacy4623672

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh250080
Al Quds pharmacy()

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Saffarini987565
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic Abdi5661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856866
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity46428116
Akileh Maternity46424112
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdali56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 771011/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 462111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605900
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 287267
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230

HOSPITALS

ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital09/990560
Ibn Sina Hospital09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09/990999

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital02/272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital02/247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT
ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
08:15Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:20Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:05Cairo (RJ)
18:30Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:45Beirut (RJ)
08:50Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:25Vienna, London (RJ)
12:35Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)

Other Flights

13:00London, Frankfurt (RJ)
13:00Paris (RJ)
13:15Cairo (RJ)
13:40Brussels, Paris (RJ)
21:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:40Damascus (RJ)
22:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
02:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

07:25Frankfurt (LH)
14:30Riyadh (SV)
14:30Aden (TY)
15:15Munich (LH)
16:00Istanbul (TK)
19:05Kiev (GU)
19:30Dubai (EK)
21:10Tel Aviv (LY)
22:40Cairo (MS)
00:40Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
04:00Rome (AZ)

Home News

Population increase
be addressed by eco
planning — Emo

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Administration and Development Bassam Bishara on Monday said the Kingdom's population growth and the impact of the past decade's economic planning on the government to direct its economic planning towards addressing the situation.

At a meeting organized by the National Population Commission (NPC) in conjunction with the Ministry of Administration and Development, Bishara said the question of population strategy is of paramount importance to the country's development.

The ministry, Bishara noted, aims at developing public administration by modernizing procedures, upgrading personnel, and training college graduates equally for the labour sector.

NPC Secretary General Ayman Salameh, who presided over the commission's permanent headquarters at the Queen Alia International Airport, outlined the NPC's growth since its inception in 1973.

The commission has organized a series of seminars, workshops and group discussions to orient government officials, employees and the public on population issues.

Bishara, from the Ministry of Administration and Development, said the NPC's role is to provide a briefing on the impact of population growth on development. He reviewed present population situation in Jordan and the latest demographic figures for the next 30 years.

He said changes will be linked to sustainable development and will be direct effects on the health, education, employment and other sectors, he added.

The participants, who presented different ministries as well as the NPC, had an open discussion on economic and social

Press association

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) Monday marked International Press Freedom Day by petitioning His Majesty King Hussein to pardon all journalists currently being tried for alleged violations of the press law.

"Your Majesty, we pledge a whole new era for the press to reflect a much more responsible, constructive, and objective approach aimed at preserving the professional minute you grant a pardon," the association said in a statement.

It added that it was closely following the government's plan to draft a new press regulations law and said it was ready to take part in all preparations for the law.

The JPA urged the government to take a constitutional opinion on all issues relating to regulating the press, "as we consider ourselves the most appropriate side to be heard and help."

It said that the world has been celebrating International Press Day since its inception in 1993 and that Jordan is a firm supporter of free press as an integral part of a nation's freedom.

Therefore, the JPA calls for the respect of a man's dignity and for safeguarding his freedom of expression without limits or constraints in international human rights conventions.

Meanwhile, the Cairo-based Federation of Arab Journalists issued a statement on International Press Day on May 6, calling on Arab governments to provide the public as well as

what's going on

* USAID's New Openness Due to This E Awarded from en Hotel down p.m.

* The Last Council, Jabe (AKA) screen

Home News

Population increase must be addressed by economic planning — Emoush

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Administrative Development Bassam Emoush on Monday said the Kingdom's population increase, both from natural growth and the migration-related issues and provide basic information on the medical and social aspects of family planning.

On Sunday, the NPC announced the start of a two-month campaign to orient the public on population-related issues and provide basic information on the medical and social aspects of family planning.

Mr. Salameh said 20 teams will be touring the Amman and Irbid regions to implement the campaign, which is designed to help local communities receive information on and adopt family planning procedures.

The ministry, Dr. Emoush noted, aims at developing public administration by modernising and upgrading procedures, training employees and enabling college graduates to qualify for the labour market.

NPC Secretary General Nabih Salameh, who noted that the commission has its permanent headquarters at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAFSD), outlined the NPC's growth since its creation in 1973.

The commission has worked out a plan for organising meetings with various ministries, voluntary groups and charitable organisations to orient them on and seek their help in handling the economic and social dimensions of population issues.

Issa Masarweh, from the NPC, presented a briefing tackling the impact of population growth on development. He reviewed the present population situation in Jordan and the projected demographic changes over the next 30 years.

These changes will be closely linked to sustainable development and will have direct effects on the water, health, education, environment and other sectors, he added.

The participants, who represented different ministries as well as the NPC, held an open discussion on economic and social issues resulting from population growth.

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CONFERENCE ON DISABLED OPENS: Their Royal Highnesses Prince Raed, the chief chamberlain, and Princess Majeed open a two-day conference Monday entitled "Changing Disability Services in a Changing Society." The conference was organised by the Swedish Organisation for Individual Relief (SOIR) in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development and the National Council for the Welfare of the Disabled. The conference was also attended by HRH Prince Firas, His Majesty King Hussein's health secretary (Petra photo)

Telecommunications network can meet needs of 'all' citizens — official

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A senior official announced Monday that there were no infrastructure or financial limitations standing in the way of making the Internet available to Jordanians across the Kingdom.

"The Kingdom has a [telecommunications] network that can meet the needs of all its citizens," the senior official, who asked not to be named, said. He added that the other major obstacle, data-communications circuit pricing, has now been removed.

Last month, following His Majesty King Hussein's initiative, the Kingdom's four Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and the National Information Centre started leasing circuits through Hashem 1, a satellite channel, at rates 30 per cent cheaper than those available through the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) — the Kingdom's main telecommunications provider.

The channel, maintained by His Majesty's Royal Communications (HMRC), has a capacity of 18 megabits, meaning that it can support 1,350 phone calls at the same time.

With a 30 per cent difference in price, Hashem 1 is now providing the majority of the NIC's and the four ISPs' bandwidths.

But the reduced cost circuits come with a condition. "The near-cost rates on these [international] circuits does not mean a higher margin of profit," the senior official said. "This [price reduction] must be mirrored on the lives of everyday people, as this was done because the King wants the people of Jordan to reach out and communicate with the world."

Hashem 1 was established by Royal Decree in late 1995 for use by Al Hussein Medical Centre to link up with the Mayo Clinic in the United States.

In order to honour the commitment stipulated in the contract signed between the ISPs and HMRC, technical know-how resources between ISPs, the NIC and HMRC will be pooled.

These pooled resources will be used in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the JTC to link the Kingdom's more than 5,000 government-run schools, of which 4,000 are primary schools.

The project will start by linking secondary schools first because the bulk of investment, computers, is already present, said Yousef Nsair, NIC director.

"What they [secondary schools] need to do now is invest in communications," said Dr. Nsair, adding that "primary schools will follow in the second stage."

Asked about the period of implementation, Dr. Nsair indicated that with the availability of technical know-how and equipment, it all depended on funding.

Meanwhile, on a commercial level, Imad Ayoub, Global One's general manager, said the company was "considering ways to make the Internet available to the mass market."

Ma'an Suhaimat, general manager of the First Telecom communication Group, FirstNet's mother company, reiterated the pledge he made in April to extend funding and support to any project that would help develop Jordan.

FirstNet was the first ISP to establish Points of Presence in Irbid, Zarqa and Ajlun, making the Internet available through a local phone call in these locations.

Professional associations hail King's decision to meet with union leaders

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's professional associations on Monday hailed His Majesty King Hussein's decision to visit their headquarters and meet with their presidents as the beginning of a new era in their relations with the government.

"We have to break the ice between us and the government, and His Majesty did this for us by accepting our invitation to visit the professional unions building and meet with union leaders," said Hosni Abu Ghida, chairperson of the council of presidents of the Union of Professional Associations.

Jordan's 13 professional associations, mostly controlled by Islamists and leftists, have locked horns with the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali since it took office last March.

Vocal critics of the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and what they describe as "government policies aimed at lowering the ceiling of public freedoms," the unions joined 13 opposition parties in a call for a general boycott of last November's parliamentary elections.

At a ceremony at the Palace of Culture on Sunday marking the 45th anniversary of the assumption of his constitutional powers, the King said he accepted "with all pleasure" the union leaders' invitation to visit their headquarters.

"Let us leave the past behind and look to the present and the future," the King said.

"Let us identify the pitfalls and find out the things that people are blaming us for," King Hussein told an audience of top officials, dignitaries, senior army, police and security officials, as well as foreign diplomats.

"Let us find out the points of weakness and how we can remedy them," he said.

The King expressed hope that his meeting with union leaders would bring about "a very frank discussion and dialogue to determine what is best for us and to reach a consensus which will give us the opportunity to accomplish more and more for this country and for the region."

Though no date has yet been set for the meeting, Mr. Abu Ghida told the Jordan Times that "based on His Majesty's fast reply [to the invitation], I think it will be a matter of days, not weeks."

Mr. Abu Ghida, who is also the president of the 38,000-strong Jordan Engineers Association, said a meeting of all union presidents today will identify and discuss the issues to be tackled during the upcoming talks with the King.

A heated debate between the government and the professional associations was sparked by a new draft law that the government is expected to submit to Parliament to regulate the organisation and activities of the unions.

In his speech from the Throne inaugurating the current 13th Parliament late November, the King entrusted Dr. Majali with drafting a law to help modernise and develop the 80,000-strong professional associations.

Changes to the professional associations law are expected to make membership in the unions voluntary, provide separate unions for public and private sector members, and appoint a "manager" to supervise the activities of each association. Union leaders have rejected such proposals as aimed at "depoliticise" the professional associations, traditionally a hotbed for the opposition.

But, "His Majesty made it very clear in his speech [on Sunday] that everything is negotiable and that he is as ready as usual to sit and listen, in the interest of the nation," Mr. Abu Ghida said.

Arabic translation of children's classic launched

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Arabic translation of the classic Canadian novel "Anne of Green Gables" was launched last week at the new Amman City Hall.

A theatre reading of the book was presented by a Jordanian student and a Canadian student to symbolise the blending of the two cultures brought about by this venture.

Mona Henning, owner of Dar Al Mona, the publisher of the book, said she had wanted this book translated into Arabic as it was a "sincere piece of literature on what young girls could do."

"We rarely have a female heroine in our Arabic literature. I chose this book because the heroine was a female and a child at that," "Anne of Green Gables," written by Lucy Montgomery, is considered to be one of the most important books in the genre of children's literature. It is the story of Anne, an orphan who is mistakenly taken for a boy by her foster parents. She turns out to be not quite what was expected with her unconventional romantic and mischievous behaviour.

The book was translated by Sukeina Ibrahim, a Syrian author.

According to Mrs. Henning, children's books in Arabic are scarce because "the Arab World only started to think of children and their literature in the past 25 years."

Dar Al Mona, which has been publishing since the early 1980s, focuses on Scandinavian books, as Mrs. Henning believes they bring good quality literature and amusement to the Arab child. Jordan, she said, has a few authors of children's books who are seriously trying to reach children.

"But in general, we don't have many authors of children's books. I think that society has to make reading part of a tradition, and it should be given its own space and importance in Jordan," Mrs. Henning said.

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Monday reviewed the progress of a government-appointed ministerial committee in implementing a programme for combating poverty and unemployment.

Discussion focused on the final version of the programme, which falls under the Jordanian National Strategy on Fighting Poverty and Unemployment, according to a statement after the meeting.

It said the committee members reviewed the programme's four aspects, which are being carried out by various governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The first stage entails restructuring and expanding the work of the National Aid Fund, the second deals with training and employment in accordance with the requirements of the local labour market, the third concerns granting small loans to develop small-size projects to create jobs for poor groups, and the fourth aspect concerns the development of basic social infrastructure in various regions of the country, according to the statement.

Dr. Majali urged the committee to speed up its work and undertake the executive steps needed to translate their decisions into facts on the ground.

The government has earmarked allocations for the four stages of the programme and the committee will convene next week to follow up on the committee's work, he added.

The committee comprises the ministers of public works and housing, education and higher education, finance, health and medical care, awqaf and Islamic affairs, social development, labour and planning.

Press association appeals for pardon of journalists

By Ali Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) Monday marked International Press Freedom Day by petitioning His Majesty King Hussein to pardon all journalists currently being tried for allegedly violating the press law.

"Your Majesty, we pledge a whole new start for the press to reflect a much more responsible, constructive, and objective approach aimed at preserving the profession the minute you grant a pardon," the association said in a statement.

It added that it was closely following the government's plan to draft a new press and publications law and said it was ready to take part in all preparations for the law.

The JPA urged the government to take its professional opinion on all issues relating to regulating the press, "as we consider ourselves the most appropriate side to give advice and help."

It said that the world has been celebrating International Press Day since its declaration in 1993 and that Jordan is a firm believer of free press as an integral part of mankind's freedom.

"Therefore, the JPA calls for the respect of man's dignity and for savouring his freedom of expression without limits as guaranteed in international human rights conventions."

Meanwhile, the Cairo-based Federation of Arab Journalists issued a statement marking Arab Journalism Day on May 6.

The Federation called on Arab governments to provide the public as well as journalists with guarantees of free expression without limitations.

"Despite slight progress in a few Arab countries, the Federation finds that democratic and constitutional reforms in most Arab countries are not proceeding well, which negatively affects freedom of the press," the statement said.

It said the Arab media still suffer from tough and anti-democratic measures that hinder it from fully performing its duty.

The statement noted that the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) placed two Arab leaders on its list of the 10 "enemies of the press" for the year 1997.

Tunisian President Zein Al Abedine Ben Ali, as well as Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, were on the CPJ list, which was issued May 3.

"The Federation demands that all Arab governments protect and preserve freedom of the press and push forward their democratic processes," the statement said, while urging journalists to abide by the codes and ethics of the profession.

In a related development, the Washington-based Freedom House, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of liberty and democracy throughout the world, said that only 20 per cent of world's peoples live in countries with a free press.

"Worldwide today, only one person in five has access to news and analysis that is not distorted or censored... in addition, the pervasive harassment of journalists, even in partly free countries, encourages self-censorship. An unfree press cannot help liberate an unfree society," the author of the survey, Leonard Sussman, said.

The 1998 survey on press freedom found that 1.2 billion people in 67 countries have access to a free press, 2.2 billion people in 45 countries have limited access, and 2.5 billion live in 65 nations where the print and broadcast media are not free.

"Compared to the previous year's ratings, one per cent fewer of the world's people now live in nations with a free press," the survey said.

In the Middle East, Freedom House said that "while two, Lebanon and Qatar, moved from partly free to not free, Jordan's press returned to the partly free category after temporarily [dropping] to not free due to a severe press law passed in 1997."

A map of the world accompanying the report shows Jordan as the only country in the Middle East with partly free media, while most of Asia and Africa were indicated as being not free.

According to the survey, there was a slight decrease in the number of press-freedom violation cases in 1997. At least 41 journalists were killed, five fewer than 1996. Thirty five were kidnapped, compared to 47 the earlier year. Some 310 were arrested, down from 372, while 207 were physically assaulted.

"It is, however, small comfort for the victims and their families — and for the colleagues of journalist-victims, whose work may be circumscribed (self-censored) as they regard the potential penalty for honest, often courageous reporting."

what's going on

LECTURE

- * USAID's Expanded Role and the New Opportunities That Can Be Had Due To This Expanded Role" by Brian Atwood from USAID at the Le Meridien Hotel (former Forte Grand) at 2:30 p.m.

PLAY


- * Play on the environment entitled "Earth Puts People on Trial" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Works by Muhammad Al 'Amiri at the Jordan Writers Association building, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4621724), until May 8.
- * Works by Ecuadorian artist Olmedo Quimbata at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until May 12.
- * Works by Yassin Al Mohammadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 7.
- * Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Etel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 21. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashi entitled "A Suite of Heads," and works by contemporary Arab artists.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF "GOLDEN HELMSMEN OF TOURISM"

JORDAN CHAPTER



Greetings

The President, The Board And The Members Of The Association Wish To Extend Warmest Greetings to

H.R.H. Prince Abdullah Ben Alhussein

(Honorary President Of The Association)

On The Occasion Of The Royal Decree Promoting His Royal Highness To The Rank Of Major General

French premier urges greater understanding on Pacific isle

NOUMEA (AFP) — French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin called Monday for an end to prejudice between different cultures as he opened a new centre here dedicated to New Caledonia's indigenous Kanak people.

The ceremony came a day before Mr. Jospin was to sign with the Kanak separatist movement and pro-French loyalists a historic accord which could eventually pave the way to independence for New Caledonia.

As he presided over the opening of the centre dedicated to slay Kanak leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the French leader acknowledged that "it was the feeling that the Kanak's cultural identity was being negated which was at the origin of his revolt."

He admitted there had been "imprudence, provocation, injustices and dramas" during France's colonial rule of the Pacific territory.

"Misunderstanding" was "at the origin of the serious conflicts which in the past opposed the Kanaks to the other communities or the French administration," Mr.

Jospin said. Tjibaou "has taught us that all political conflict has a cultural dimension. Clearly, the Kanak culture can now open up towards others. The dialogue between cultures thus becomes a means of building peace."

Under the new agreement struck in April in Paris after two months of tough talks between the island's pro- and anti-independence factions, the divided South Pacific territory will from 1999 see a step-by-step devolution.

The 200,000 residents will vote by the end of the year whether the island should have its own government with enlarged powers.

A referendum on independence from France, which annexed the territory in 1953, will be held within 15 to 20 years.

The talks to settle the future of the islands about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia stemmed from a 1988 agreement, known as the Matignon accord, that ended simmering unrest and violence by pledging a referendum this year on self-determination.

It is hoped the Paris

accord will end decades of tension between indigenous Melanesian Kanak people and the French and other settlers who, though in the minority, held economic and political sway.

However, the two sides remained fiercely opposed on whether the island should seek independence from France or not.

"I hope that in 20 years, the consultations will lead to New Caledonia remaining within the republic. That would be the best for all the communities living there together," said Jacques Lafleur, head of the loyalist Rally for Caledonia in the Republic (RPCR).

Taking into account cultures, the dignity of the Melanesians is necessary so that this country can live in peace."

For his part, the head of the separatist Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), Roch Wamytan, said it was "obvious" the new accords would "lead to independence, and a quasi-state in association with France. Otherwise, FLNKS would not have signed them."

"The Caledonians must express themselves around the kernel, the Kanak people, colonised, who keep their right to political emancipation and independence. "It's an outstretched hand, an invitation to create together the people of tomorrow."

Since 1975, when Kanak separatists launched a campaign for independence, France has faced more trouble in New Caledonia than in any of the other 10 possessions scattered across the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as in the Caribbean and in South America.

Representatives from 20 countries attended the inauguration of the Jean-Marie Tjibaou cultural centre, including the speaker of Australia's House of Representatives, Ian Sinclair, New Zealand's Maori Affairs Minister Prime Henare, Vanuatu Prime Minister Donald Kalpokas and Cook Islands Premier Sir Geoffrey Henry.

Tjibaou was a separatist Kanak leader who was assassinated on May 4, 1989, by an advocate of immediate independence who accused him of betraying the cause by signing the Matignon accords.



Gerard Finale (centre) who is accused of masterminding the murder of French Riviera parliamentarian Yann Piat assassinated four years ago, appears in the heavily-guarded court of Draguignan surrounded by Olivier Tomassone (left) and Stephane Chiarisoli two others suspected in the assassination (Reuters photo)

Tight security as seven go on trial for lawmaker's slaying

DRAGUIGNAN, France (AP) — Seven men went on trial Monday for the 1994 slaying of a woman lawmaker who crusaded against corruption along France's southern coast.

The trial, expected to last six weeks, got under way in this southern town amid unusually tight security, guarded by two companies of elite CRS national police plus a police commando team.

Motorcycle-bound attackers shot Yann Piat three times Feb. 25, 1994, as her chauffeur drove her near her home in Mont des Oiseaux near the port city of Toulon. The two men on the Yamaha 750 were believed to be Lucien Ferri, 26, the

alleged gunman, and the driver Marco di Caro, 25.

The two were arrested June 17, 1994, along with four other alleged accomplices, also in their twenties — Stephane Chiarisoli, 25, Olivier Tomassone, 23, Stephane Guechguet, 25, and Romain Gressler, 23.

Investigators the same day also arrested Gerard Finale, 53, the alleged mastermind of the hit and the owner of a restaurant in the nearby port of Hyeres.

Piat had campaigned against what she called "a culture of corruption" in the area. She also likely made enemies by switching from the far-right National Front to the conservative Republican Party.

In a letter she wrote Jan. 22, 1992, she said that "in case of a fatal accident" involving herself, it would be opportune to question Maurice Arreckx, former mayor of Toulon and president of the local General Council until 1994. Mr. Arreckx is among those expected on the witness stand.

The prosecution has yet to accept the theory of a political settling of scores. But the scenario gathered steam last year with the book "The Yann Piat Affair: Assassins at the Heart of Power." The authors alluded to two conservative former cabinet members but were fined in a defamation suit and the book was withdrawn.

'Mr. Super Corn' leaves Seoul with fertilisers and corn for North Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — A South Korean known as "Mr. Super Corn" left Monday on his way to North Korea to help the starving nation avert future food shortages.

A spokesman for the International Corn Foundation said Kim Soon-Kwon would leave for Pyongyang from Beijing Tuesday.

Mr. Kim won his nickname for his 17 years of work in impoverished African states on hardy corn hybrids that can withstand drought. He took with him six tonnes of corn seeds and 1,000 tonnes of fertiliser.

When he first visited North Korea in January the government asked him to relay a request to Seoul for 200,000 tonnes of fertiliser.

The request led to the first official government contacts in nearly four

years. But the Beijing talks broke down last month after Seoul said it would only provide the fertiliser at government level if Pyongyang agreed to set a timetable to discuss the issue of reuniting families separated since the 1950-53 Korean war.

North Korea's grain stocks ran out at the end of March and it is now fully dependent on foreign aid.

Catherine Bertini, executive director of the World Food Programme, said recently the Communist state's food situation had improved but it still faced "staggering" shortages requiring aid for years to come.

The secretary-general of South Korea's National Red Cross (KNRC), Lee Byung-Woong, is meanwhile

due to meet his North Korean counterpart Lee Kyong-Rin, a KNRC spokesman said.

The South Korean Red Cross chief took with him food aid including flour, fertiliser, powdered milk and baby food.

"We believe talks will be held between the two on issues such as humanitarian aid and the reunion of separated families," the spokesman said.

"It is premature to predict but the North has been showing flexibility now despite the breakthrough of Beijing talks."

In February Red Cross officials from the two Koreas agreed that South Korea would provide 50,000 tonnes of food for the North.

U.N. team arrives for talks over southern Afghan pullout

KABUL (AFP) — A top team of United Nations humanitarian officials arrived Monday for talks with Taleban officials aimed at resolving their pullout from southern Afghanistan.

The team, led by New York-based deputy coordinator Martin Griffiths from the U.N. humanitarian assistance headquarters, is scheduled to discuss issues related to U.N. concerns over staff security in Taleban-held areas.

Mr. Griffiths, who is accompanied by U.N. officials from New York and Islamabad, is set to stay in the capital for up to four days of talks with Taleban officials.

However, delegates were tight-lipped on their entry into the capital, asserting they will reserve comment until after the current round of talks are over.

U.N. aid activities in the southern Taleban-militia base of Kandahar were suspended in March following a series of assaults on U.N. expatriate staff by senior Taleban officials.

According to the U.N., three separate staff members were assaulted with a table, a flask and the bare hands of a Taleban official.

The U.N. is also concerned about continued restrictions on women, including a rule forcing non-Afghan Muslim women working in aid to be accompanied by a male relative.

The Taleban, who are not recognised as Afghanistan's legitimate government by the U.N., accuse the organisation of taking an anti-Taleban stance.

In particular, the strict Muslim movement complaints that the U.N. left Kandahar in a storm of protest but remained silent over the massive looting of U.N. premises in the anti-Taleban alliance stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif last year.

Flight cancelled after bee discovered in cabin

TOKYO (AP) — A Japan Airlines flight had to be cancelled Sunday after cabin attendants failed to oust an unwelcome guest — a huge bee that boarded ahead of passengers.

JAL's ground attendants saw the bee flying into the plane's cabin just before they finished preparing it for departure from New Chitose Airport in northern Japan to the central city of Nagoya, a JAL spokesman said Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The bee eluded attendants trying to catch it, and nobody was stung, the spokesman said.

Cancelling a flight because of a bee was a first, he added.

Officials at the airport, on the island of Hokkaido 760 kilometres north of Tokyo, scrubbed the flight out of fear the bee might cause panic among passengers.

Passengers were reassigned to another flight to Nagoya. The bee, sprayed with insecticide, was seized about an hour later.

Maskhadov seeks to mobilise Chechenya to find kidnapped Russian envoy

MOSCOW (AFP) — Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov sought to mobilise his tiny republic in the hunt for Russian special envoy Valentin Vlasov Monday, as a massive security sweep for the kidnapped official continued.

Mr. Maskhadov was to chair a meeting between the authorities, religious leaders and Chechen elders in the capital Grozny to discuss Mr. Vlasov's abduction Friday by gunmen near the border with neighbouring Ingushetia, ITAR-TASS reported.

The kidnappers, who Chechen officials said spoke fluent Russian without the heavy Caucasus accent, have so far made no demands for the release of Mr. Vlasov, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Chechen deputies were also to tour the tiny North Caucasus republic in an effort to enlist public support for the authorities' efforts to find the Russian aide, ITAR-TASS said.

"A lot of information was collected in the three days after Vlasov's abduction,

which allows us to narrow down the number of possible scenarios," Chechen prosecutor general Khavazh Serbiyev told Interfax without elaborating.

He ruled out suggestions the abduction "was staged in accordance with a scenario jointly worked out by people from the centre (Moscow) and the North Caucasus," Interfax quoted him as saying.

Sunday his deputy Magomed Magomadov blamed the abduction on "a highly professional group of terrorists," fuelling speculation that the kidnapping was not one of the routine hostage-takings for ransom that have plagued the region since the end of Chechenya's war of independence from Moscow.

Senior Russian and Chechen officials at the weekend said the abduction had been planned by hard-liners opposed to an August 1996 peace pact which ended the 21-month conflict but left Chechenya's final political status unresolved.

Mr. Vlasov, Russian President Boris Yeltsin's special envoy to Chechenya, was the first senior Russian official to be kidnapped in the region. Security remained high across the breakaway mountainous republic Monday, where more than 1,000 troops were involved in the hunt for the kidnappers.

The Chechen authorities have offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to Mr. Vlasov's safe release, irritating Moscow which ruled out making any payment to secure the envoy's freedom.

Mr. Vlasov's bodyguard and driver have been arrested over the kidnapping, the former for failing to offer resistance, the latter for complicity in the abduction.

Mr. Magomadov has however criticised the Russian official's "criminal negligence" in failing to take adequate security measures in a region close to the site of a bloody attack on Russian military two weeks ago which left five dead, including a general.

Tribal rebels stage bomb attack after massacre in India

GUWAHATI, India (AFP) — Tribal rebels staged a bomb attack Monday in a village in the far east Indian state of Assam, a day after killing 14 bus passengers in the region, officials here said.

They said four people were seriously injured in Monday's blast carried out by Bodo tribal insurgents in the state's remote Darang district.

State Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta, meanwhile, said 30 Bodos were arrested for Sunday's massacre in Kokrajhar district, the bloodiest attack this year in Assam.

Bodo guerrillas, campaigning for a tribal homeland in Assam, ambushed a bus, identified 14 members of a rival Santhal community and dragged them out before killing them Sunday.

More than 100,000 Santals have fled their homes in Assam because of frequent attacks by the dominant Bodo groups.

Chief Minister Mahanta said passenger buses would be escorted by troops in Assam to prevent similar bloodletting.

In November 1996, a clash between the Bodos and the Santals in Kokrajhar, bordering Bhutan, left more than 500 dead.

Another 200,000 people were left homeless and the government has housed them in heavily-guarded camps in the district.

Sunday's massacre came a day after Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee decided to hold talks with the far-east region's oldest tribal insurgent group.

Mr. Vajpayee's new Hindu nationalist-led government plans to negotiate with different groups of tribal guerrillas in India's seven far eastern states.

Tribal rebellions in Assam and six other remote states, which have a total population of 30 million, have left thousands dead in the past five decades.

New Delhi suspects that some of the separatist groups have camps in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burma.

Major earthquake rocks Okinawa; tsunami warning issued

NAHA, Japan (AP) — A powerful earthquake rumbled through Okinawa, Taiwan and the Philippines Monday, setting off tsunami alerts and sending hundreds fleeing for the safety of high ground.

There were no reports of casualties or serious damage.

The earthquake struck at 8:30 a.m. Japan time (2330 GMT Sunday) and had a preliminary magnitude of 7.7, according to Japan's Central Meteorological Agency.

The agency immediately issued a tsunami alert for coastal areas in Okinawa, a string of islands in southern Japan, fearing the offshore quake might generate waves as high as 2 metres. Such waves can cause serious damage.

Hundreds of people on Ishigaki, the island in Okinawa nearest the epicentre, fled by car for high ground. But the first tsunami to reach Ishigaki was only 10 centimetres high, and officials rescinded the alert about two hours after

the quake hit. The quake was centred 20 kilometres under the seabed 260 kilometres south of Ishigaki, which has a population of 43,000.

It was also felt on the east coast of Taiwan, where it was strong enough to sway buildings, and in the northern Philippines, where seismologists cautioned that aftershocks were possible.

Ishigaki city hall official Nagahiro Uechi said groceries were shaken off store shelves, but there were no reports of serious damage or injuries.

Had the earthquake hit closer to shore, it could have been catastrophic. A quake registering 7.2 killed more than 6,000 people and flattened the western Japan city of Kobe in 1995.

Monday's quake was hardly felt in Naha, which is Okinawa's regional capital, on an island just north of Ishigaki.

Despite the alerts, beaches around Naha were crowded with tourists here for a string of holidays. "It's Golden Week," said

Masue Shimabukuro, 34. "It would take more than a tidal wave to get people off the beaches," Japan is one of the world's most earthquake-prone nations, sitting along the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and straddling four tectonic plates, slabs that move across the Earth's surface.

The quake was also the 19th to strike Taiwan this year. A magnitude 5.7 earthquake centred in the same area as Monday's jolted eastern Taiwan Saturday. Seismic activity has increased in other areas recently as well.

Thousands of earthquakes, most too weak to be felt, have been recorded in the Ito seaside resort area, which is just south of Tokyo, and the meteorological agency last week warned a volcano in northern Japan may be rumbling back to life.

Ishigaki is one of dozens of islands in Okinawa, which is Japan's southernmost prefecture and is located about 1,600 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

Students recall former Tiananmen leaders with apathy on centenary

BEIJING (AFP) — China's ruling elite marked the centenary of Beijing University Monday with praise for its revolutionary past but silence about the 1989 student massacre in Tiananmen Square, as current students remembered former pro-democracy campaigners with indifference.

The former democracy movement "has nothing to do with us. The students of '89 were like actors staging a comedy," said a 19-year student of urban planning from southwestern Sichuan province, who refused to be identified.

Wang Dan, a former Beijing University student ranked number one on the government's most-wanted list following the crackdown, fled to exile in the United States last month after a total of six and a half years in prison.

Other students interviewed echoed the Sichuan teenager's comments. "I'm not here because of Wang Dan but because of the academic excellence of Beida (Beijing University). What is important to me is the academic credentials, not the political stance of the school," said a 19-year-old English major from Zhejiang province.

Others said a bigger concern than Tiananmen Square is how China's economic restructuring will affect the university, especially since this year the school is demanding tuition of 2,000 yuan (\$243) a year — a struggle for many once assured of a free education.

President Jiang Zemin led a sanitised publicity blast about the university's heroic past with a speech to 8,000 specially-chosen guests at the Great Hall of the People.

"Beijing University has a great history and revolutionary tradition and it should make further contributions to China's modernisation drive," Mr. Jiang said.

He was joined by Premier Zhu Rongji, head of the parliament Li Peng, head of the upper house Li Ruihuan and the rest of the ruling Communist Party politburo.

Despite students' professed apathy to the Tiananmen Square massacre, educators at the event said the university had become noticeably more tolerant of dissent-

ing viewpoints on campus lately.

"People can speak their opinions more freely than a year ago, for sure. I'm very happy about this. It's a big improvement," said Shen Yilian, economic adviser to Beijing University.

"The level of debate and the kinds of things that are being published now are much more open than they were a few years ago," commented Gregory Kulacki, director of the Council on International Educational Exchange, which runs several exchange programmes in China.

While participants praised the increasing openness on campus, authorities appeared determined to keep the celebrations from taking on political overtones.

Former Tiananmen Square leader Wang Youcai, an alumnus invited to join the festivities, was arrested by police after he arrived in Beijing, apparently to prevent him launching protests, according to a human rights group. He had recently called for the government to rehabilitate former leaders of the movement whom authorities have branded criminals.

Academics said the university faces challenges such as stimulating creative discoveries in an academic environment that relies heavily on lectures and memorisation.

"China still uses very much lecture-oriented techniques. There is not a lot of discussion in classes. There hasn't been much change there," Mr. Kulacki said.

"The central government has said one of its priorities is promoting higher education to foster creative scientific discoveries."

Economic adviser Mr. Shen said that in line with efforts to move away from a state-planned economy, the government is encouraging the university to become less reliant on it for financial support.

"We may increase the number of foreign students to raise money in the future. The government still gives us a lot of money. But students who can afford it will have to pay for themselves more in the future," Mr. Shen said.

However, only about 10 per cent of students currently receive financial aid, he acknowledged. The 2,500 yuan for tuition and board represents a solid three months' income for urban workers and far more for those from rural areas.



Former South Korean spy chief Kwon Young-Hae is escorted by police to a Seoul court (Reuters photo)

Indian defence minister under attack for statement on China

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes came under attack Monday for his explosive comment that China was India's number one enemy.

The Congress party, the main opposition in parliament, said the comments could jeopardise relations between India and China, which fought a brief but bitter war in 1962 and are now pursuing better relations.

Narwar Singh, a senior Congress leader and former foreign minister, described Mr. Fernandes' statements as "irresponsible and unfortunate."

"The art of diplomacy lies in increasing the number of our friends and reducing the number of our adversaries," Mr. Singh, a former ambassador, said.

"The defence minister is doing exactly the opposite," he told reporters a day after the private Home TV network released in advance the comments of Mr. Fernandes, a firebrand socialist in the new ruling coalition.

The defence minister said India faced a bigger threat from China than from Pakistan and New Delhi would make nuclear weapons if it ran out of options.

"China is potential threat number one," Mr. Fernandes said. The controversial interview will be broadcast later Monday by Home TV.

Mr. Fernandes said: "The potential threat from China is greater than that from Pakistan and any person who is concerned about India's security must agree with that fact."

He said China had stockpiled nuclear weapons in Tibet along India's borders and military airfields in Tibet had been extended in the last six months.

Mr. Fernandes also said China was training Myanmar's army and had set up a "massive electronic surveillance establishment" on Myanmar's Coco Islands on the northern tip of India's Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Sino-Indian tensions eased following a series of high-level contacts which began after a visit by then-Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing in 1988.

Narwar Singh said Mr. Fernandes in his interview ignored the thaw in ties. "The defence minister appears to be ignoring that process. This, to say the least, is both irresponsible and unfortunate."

Mr. Singh said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's government must clarify whether the comments were the personal opinion of Mr. Fernandes or the official government stance.

"It is not clear whether Fernandes is propagating his personal agenda or reflecting the views of the Vajpayee government... a clarification from the government would not be out of place," Mr. Singh added.

Mr. Fernandes, speaking on India's policy on China, said: "I think there is a reluctance to face the reality that China's intentions need to be questioned."

"This is where our country has made mistakes in the past. We made those mistakes in the early 1950s. We paid the price in the 1960s. And I think things have not changed."

His comments came on the heels of the first-ever visit to India by a chief of the Chinese army, General Fu Quanyou.

India says China still holds 40,000 square kilometres of its territory at Aksai Chin in Kashmir. China lays claim to a swathe of Indian territory in the far eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Intelligence chief claims all responsibility for smear campaign

SEOUL (AFP) — Former intelligence chief Kwon Young-Hae Monday claimed responsibility for an investigation into politicians but denied the aim was to block President Kim Dae-Jung winning elections.

"All the responsibility must be placed on me," Mr. Kwon, 61, said in an opening statement as he and six co-defendants appeared for trial at a Seoul district court.

"My men here had long risked their lives for intelligence operations and just followed my orders faithfully," he said, appealing for clemency for his men.

It was a dramatic turnaround from Mr. Kwon's earlier stance. He tried to commit suicide by slashing his stomach with a blade during interrogations in March, to avoid answering charges of masterminding the smear campaign.

Mr. Kwon admitted he had arranged pre-election news conferences imply-

ing links between Pyongyang and Kim Dae-Jung's camp. But he denied the news conferences were aimed at foiling Mr. Kim's presidential bid.

Mr. Kwon quit as head of the National Security Planning Agency (NSP) in February when Mr. Kim, a former dissident who once escaped an assassination attempt by intelligence officials, took office.

Along with Mr. Kwon, the first intelligence chief on trial for meddling in politics, five former NSP officials and Yoon Hong-Joon, a U.S.-based businessman, were in court on charges of libel and violating election and security laws.

Prosecutors accused Mr. Yoon of speaking for intelligence officials in return for \$25,000.

The former NSP chief is accused of masterminding a secret NSP plot, code-named "Operation North Wind," to portray Mr. Kim and his followers as leftist

sympathisers.

A storm erupted after Mr. Kwon's lawyers claimed the president's son, Kim Hong-Il, and his followers had maintained secret connections with North Korea.

"We have intelligence information on connections between some (ruling party) politicians and North Korea," argued chief lawyer Oh Je-Do.

The lawyer, however, refused to elaborate on his claims, offering to disclose sensitive details if the court approved his demand for closed hearings.

He also argued that Mr. Kwon was innocent because he investigated possible links between Pyongyang and South Korean politicians as part of his "normal intelligence operations."

Prosecutors denounced the lawyers for seeking to twist the court's proceedings with groundless allegations.

Mr. Kwon is suspected

of leaking through his men a classified NSP report of secret contacts between South Korean politicians and North Korean officials in Beijing.

Prosecutors Monday issued summonses to two opposition lawmakers over suspicions they sought North Korea's help in last year's presidential polls.

The trial comes amid a sweeping government inquiry into policy failures and government malpractice under the rule of ex-President Kim Young-Sam.

The house-cleaning drive triggered a political storm, with opposition members accusing the ruling camp of undermining their power base before local assembly elections in June.

The June elections for mayors, governors and local assemblies have been seen as the first test of Kim Dae-Jung's leadership amid the lingering economic crisis.

Top U.N. envoy meets Sri Lankan officials on children in war

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A U.N. envoy met with Sri Lankan officials Monday as part of a campaign to keep children out of the country's 15-year-old ethnic war.

Olara Oumnu arrived in this Indian Ocean island Sunday on a week-long visit during which he will travel to areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the main rebel group.

The Sri Lankan government accuses the LTTE of using children as fighters in its battle for an independent homeland for the minority Tamils.

The U.N. appointed Mr. Oumnu as special representative for children in armed conflict after the General Assembly adopted a report by Graça Machel in 1996.

"Mr. Oumnu's visit is a recognition of Sri Lanka's desire to implement the Machel Report, which would contribute towards addressing the issue comprehensively at both the national and international level," the Sri Lankan foreign ministry said in a statement Monday after Mr. Oumnu met with Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and other officials.

Mr. Oumnu was not available for comment.

Mr. Oumnu's duties include lobbying governments and private organisations to enforce the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls on states not to recruit children below age 15 into armed forces. He has also urged the creation of programmes to help integrate former child fighters into society.

The LTTE announced Sunday it would observe a unilateral cease-fire Wednesday and Thursday, apparently timed to coincide with Mr. Oumnu's visit to the war-torn area.

But the envoy's visit was preceded by fresh flare-ups between government forces and Tamil rebels that left at least 23 people dead on both sides in attacks Sunday, police and military officials said.

Monday, Sri Lanka's defence ministry said it was unaware of any cease-fire proposal by the LTTE, but promised to take all measures to ensure that the U.N. representative could visit any area he wanted.

Mr. Oumnu is scheduled to travel to the former rebel stronghold of Jaffna and to Vavuniya and Mannar. Jaffna and Vavuniya are under full government control, but the Tigers control parts of Mannar.

Prince Ranariddh returns for election deadline

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Deposed co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh returned to Cambodia from exile for the third time Monday before a deadline to register for July's election.

The prince is prepared to stay permanently, according to aides, who noted however that he would probably leave Cambodia at least once more before the July 26 polls.

About 200 supporters, some MPs and a few government officials turned up at the airport to welcome him along with the North Korean ambassador, the head of the U.N. mission and a U.S. diplomat.

His plane touched down minutes before a tropical downpour hit Phnom Penh, which supporters said was a good omen for his return and the election.

Political parties have until Thursday to submit their list of candidates to the National Election Commission. Voter registration is due to begin in two weeks.

Although the prince returned to meet the deadlines, it remained unclear whether his opposition alliance would take part in the election, as it has been highly critical of preparations.

"I'm here to check on progress for the elections," the prince said on arrival from Bangkok. "I have to go and register of course."

The election will be the first in Cambodia since the 1993 poll organised by the United Nations, which led to the failed power-sharing arrangement between strongman Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh.

Last July Hun Sen ousted the prince in a week-end of fierce fighting in the capital. The prince appeared unconcerned by Hun Sen's remarks that he would not meet the prince for election talks unless he dropped his claim to be first prime minister.

"I said I wanted to see (Hun Sen). I never mentioned in what capacity, in order to pave the way for the elections," the prince said. "Only the Cambodian people can take my mandate away."

The prince's alliance, the National United Front, has said it will boycott the polls if conditions it has set, mainly a major amendment to the election law and revisions to the composition of an electoral commission, are not fulfilled.

The front is calling for the law to be amended to change the location of vote counting. It is also demanding a new electoral commission which it says is now heavily biased towards the Cambodian People's Party of Hun Sen.

The front has joined the international community in expressing grave concerns over political violence and intimidation and restricted opposition access to the media.

Nearly 100 of Prince Ranariddh's supporters have been killed since his ousting, according to human rights workers.

An aide said the prince's movements within Cambodia would be "severely restricted" until international election observers, organised by the United Nations, were in place in every province and rural centre.

"We need the international observers — as many as possible — in the villages to protect the prince," the aide told AFP. "There are still not enough security arrangements being made."

Aside from the threatened boycott, there are other obstacles to Prince Ranariddh's participation in the polls.

Under the terms of a Japanese-sponsored peace plan under which the prince was granted a pardon for two criminal convictions, his resistance forces army must still be reintegrated into the government army.

Monday Hun Sen appointed five senior defence ministry officials to discuss the integration with a representative of the resistance army.

"The beginning of this discussion is the last step to be taken in order to realise completely the Japanese Peace Plan," the Hun Sen cabinet said in a statement.



Cambodia's deposed prime minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh is welcomed upon his arrival at Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport. Prince Ranariddh, who has returned to Cambodia twice since he was ousted as co-premier last July, told reporters that he was back to stay (Reuters photo)

Drugs that killed cancer in mice to be tested on humans within one year

BOSTON (AP) — A combination of drugs has been proven to kill cancer in mice. Now the question is: Will it work in humans? The drugs — angiostatin and endostatin — work by cutting off the blood supply to cancerous tumours. Given intravenously to mice, the drugs have shrunk tumours and made them disappear altogether. The drugs also appear to prevent the spread of tumours.

Their innovator, Dr. Judah Folkman, a Harvard professor and researcher at Boston's Children's Hospital, called the combination of proteins "very promising," but cautioned that success might not carry over to human patients.

"We have to be careful with expectations," Dr. Folkman warned.

But the director of the nation's top cancer research centre called the initial

studies on mice "remarkable and wonderful" and said he hopes to begin testing the drugs on small numbers of humans within a year.

"I am putting nothing on higher priority than getting this into clinical trials," Dr. Richard D. Klausner, director of the National Cancer Institute, told The New York Times.

The development of the drugs — which are protein fragments found in human blood — caps a 30-year research process that began when Dr. Folkman reasoned that tumours cannot grow or spread without a steady blood supply.

A decade ago, Dr. Folkman and other researchers developed a first generation of cancer-inhibiting drugs that slowed the growth of tumours in animals.

In experiments during the

past five years, these early cancer inhibitors have been found to slow growth of tumours in human patients as well, Dr. Folkman said.

The new proteins take the cancer therapy one step further by eliminating the flow of blood to tumours, much like shutting off the water supply to a house.

Furthermore, tumours do not become resistant to endostatin, as they can to chemotherapy drugs, Dr. Folkman said.

"If you look at tumours like a bunch of grapes on a vine, you could say current drugs and chemotherapy treat the grapes," Dr. Folkman said. "But these new drugs treat the vine so the grapes will wither and die."

Although it is impossible to speculate on which types of human cancer might respond to the new drugs, Dr. Folkman said the pro-

teins have eliminated forms of colon, prostate, breast and brain cancers in mice. So far, he said, researchers have not found a form of cancer in mice they cannot beat.

In one of Dr. Folkman's experiments, when protein treatments were stopped among some mice, their tumours returned. But after Dr. Folkman restarted the drugs — administering them continuously — the tumours receded and the animals remained healthy.

While Dr. Folkman warns against being overly optimistic, others are predicting complete success.

Nobel laureate Dr. James Watson, who directs a cancer research centre in New York, says Dr. Folkman's research may be as significant as Charles Darwin's.

Dr. Watson told the Times: "Judah is going to cure cancer in two years."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Establishment
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Towards a freer press

AS THE day for the introduction of a new press and publications law approaches, we add our voice to that of the press association in calling on the government to involve journalists, human rights activists and lawyers to produce legislation that would guarantee freedom of expression while protecting people from misinformation.

The past five years, during which the current press law has been in force, should guide us in our quest for a balanced and progressive law.

While we acknowledge that journalists and newspapers have many shortcomings, we remind the government that its information policy has in many ways been flawed. Journalists and the press feed and live on information, and information has been and will continue to be mainly the domain of government. For credible journalism to flourish there must be credible, and timely, information. If information is neither credible nor timely, then there will be much room for speculation and for incomplete and inaccurate news reports. The first order of the day then is for the government to provide prompt, full and accurate information.

Journalists' and newspapers, meanwhile, must commit themselves to the ethics of sound journalism. Editors should not publish inaccurate or unattributable stories.

Newspapers should provide training for reporters and editors and should pay them enough to ensure that they dedicate their time to their profession.

The journalists association should act as an ombudsman monitoring newspapers, spotting mistakes and bringing them to the attention of journalists. It should also act as an arbiter striving to disputes between the press and the public outside the courts.

Government and journalists' need to stop accusing each other of hindering freedom of expression. Neither can. The information revolution is upon us. No one anywhere can put obstacles in the path of free exchange of information. What people cannot read in our newspapers or see on our television screens, they can read and see elsewhere, on the Internet or on TV satellite stations.

One thing is sure. Only those providing full, accurate and credible information will be trusted and will have impact on the people.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Riham Farra Monday said the sanctions on Iraq can be lifted in six months when the U.N. Security Council convenes to review the arms inspection situation in Iraq. The writer said that as for the U.S., it was clear in the last and the previous Security Council's sessions that Washington wants the perpetuation of the sanctions, but hope can be pinned on Russia, France and China. She said Russia and China did not only criticise Richard Butler and his inspection team's behaviour but also demanded that the nuclear file be closed permanently. France for its part has demanded that the sanctions regime be replaced with a monitoring programme to ensure that Iraq will not possess weapons of mass destruction, Farra said. The three permanent members at the U.N. Security Council, she added, can veto any U.S.-backed council resolution for maintaining the sanctions on Iraq in the coming session.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud called on the government to exempt all industrial inputs from customs duty so that Jordanian manufactured products can compete with imported goods on the local markets and abroad. The writer said that exemptions of duty is certain to encourage investors to come to Jordan and will encourage local businesspersons to pursue efforts for improving the quality of their products. Once the production cost has been reduced the producers can sell their products at competitive prices abroad, a practice followed by many countries which back their national industries, according to the writer. Noting that some industrial businesses in Jordan have been forced out of the market because of high production costs and inability to compete abroad, Daoud said the problem can be solved by reducing to a minimum or altogether scrapping the customs duty fees especially on components used in the manufacture of goods for export. Should the government follow this advice, he added, it would contribute practically towards solving the chronic unemployment problem.

The View from Fourth Circle

Power and weakness define Israel's 50th anniversary

By Rami G. Khouri

ON THE basis of the Jewish calendar, Israelis last week celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of their state on May 15, 1948. The occasion has been one of deep introspection for most Israelis, who marked the moment with typical Israeli historical solemnity, contemporary pride, and domestic political and cultural contentiousness. After observing many of the Israeli celebrations on television and reading many Israeli press articles, my personal impression is that Israelis today have reason to be both satisfied and scared.

They can be satisfied and confident because of their many significant achievements in the fields of statehood, economy, technology and human will in the face of adversity. Yet, Israelis also should be concerned and perhaps even scared, because of three powerful dimensions of their national condition today that they have largely chosen to ignore during the celebrations: a) internationally, their position on peace-making with the Palestinians is increasingly isolated and untenable; b) regionally, they suffer steadily declining acceptance in the Arab Middle East after the remarkable detente with some Arab states in 1994-1995; and, c) in Palestine/Israel, tensions between Israelis and Palestinians are rising, and their conflict is slowly being redefined in explosive cultural, religious and colonial terms.

While Israelis celebrated their own strength, security, and vitality, this 50th anniversary commemoration also showed the loneliness of the Israeli state and people, their new forms of insecurities and vulnerabilities, and the obvious conditionality of the worldwide accolades and applause they received. The world, including its enemies and potential friends in the Middle East, are using the 50th anniversary to send Israel a clear message: there can be no lasting security or normalcy for Israel until Israelis themselves fairly resolve their conflict with the Palestinians and the other Arabs. It is fascinating, for example, to see the international mass media focus on the unresolved plight and unachieved national rights of the Palestinians as an integral element of the media's coverage of Israel's 50th anniversary. This is not propaganda. It is unfinished and living history.

The ongoing celebrations emphasise that Israel today is not in danger of disappearing or of being defeated in a conventional war. This has prompted many around the world — including some Israelis — to shift their focus from the historical vulnerability of Jews because of the evils and crimes Jews suffered around the world, to the different sorts of crimes that Jews and Israelis committed against Palestinians this century. Israel is seen today as more than a miraculous and morally untouchable national haven for Jews who suffered grievous historical traumas. Israel is judged as a normal state — presumably to the satisfaction of Israelis — but a normal state that must account for its own actions and its behaviour towards others.

The principal 'other' in the modern Israeli narrative is

Israel is ideologically and diplomatically alone in the world, and its Jewish people are threatened with a brutal and cruel new form of self-inflicted exile brought about by their own wreckless use of power against others.

the Palestinian people. And Israeli actions towards the Palestinians are increasingly defined by a combination of past and present excesses. A now strong Israel is being called to account for its past colonial-style crimes of killing and driving out Palestinians, destroying hundreds of their villages, and building the Israeli state on the ashes of the Palestinian community; the same Israeli state has not a single supporter in the entire world for its contemporary ideological extremism and neo-colonial claim to maintain perpetual control of Palestinian and other Arab lands that were occupied in

the 1967 war.

Israel is ideologically and diplomatically alone in the world, and its Jewish people are threatened with a brutal and cruel new form of self-inflicted exile brought about by their own wreckless use of power against others. As Israelis celebrate their own historical survival, rebirth, and dynamism, most others in the world demand that Israel adhere to common global standards of state morality and behaviour — no occupation, no colonial subjugation, and no denying the right of others also to express their own national identity and reality.

For Palestinians, other Arabs, and the entire rest of humanity — without exception — the full measure of Israel is not the strength and nature of its power, but the quality of its actions and how it uses its power. If Israel wants true friends and not just fair-weather stock market admirers, if it wants warm neighbours and not just pacified and humiliated colonial subjects, it will have to come to terms with the full dimensions of its past and present behaviour to the Palestinians. It will have to do a better job of reconciling its national and security rights with the equal rights of its neighbours. It will have to make that final, difficult leap from the tribulations of history to the promise of normal human community in the Middle East.

Israelis should review their 50th anniversary celebrations in the wider regional and global context that will ultimately determine if they live a normal life in peace or if they remain perpetually strong but alone. Israel's current isolation and rising tensions in the region are precisely due to the fact that Israelis tend almost exclusively to address their own needs, without sufficiently considering the equal needs and rights of others in their world and their neighbourhood.

If you're in the business of being a light onto the nations, you have to live by the same rules that you want the other nations to live by — otherwise your light is a fiction, and, worse yet, a hypocrisy. That seems to me to be the message the world is sending to Israel this year, when the many achievements of the past half a century inevitably highlight the tasks still to be done, the wrongs still to be atoned for, and the rights still to be achieved.

'Witch-hunt' against Islamists

By Nicole Pope

ISTANBUL — Is Turkey drifting away from democracy and from the West? There is a growing sense among foreign observers in Turkey that the country is losing its way and gradually slipping into an isolated world of its own. As one diplomat put it, comparing Turkey to the more successful Eastern European applicants to the EU: "Turkey has been standing in one place for so long that it gives the impression of slipping back."

Take the dispute between the secular establishment and the Islamists. While most foreign diplomats agree on the need for Turkey to be vigilant and to keep an eye on the more radical Islamists, most believe in the perceived danger, trumpeted daily in alarmist reports in the press, to be wildly exaggerated. Despite the closure of the Welfare Party, despite attempted bans on the Islamic headscarf in universities, the Islamists have shown great restraint and there have, so far, been no violent incidents.

Observers now use terms like "witch-hunt" and "McCarthyism" to describe the current atmosphere, in which hundreds of civil servants, teachers, governors and mayors are being investigated for their alleged support for the "reactionaries." Clubs and associations are being raided and "militants" rounded up. Three elected mayors have already been suspended from their function by administrative order from the interior

ministry. Even the popular mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is often talked of as a future leader of the Islamist movement and, thanks to his successful management of the old Ottoman capital, has won the respect of many inhabitants who do not share his political views, is now the target of enquiries that could lead to his dismissal. His colleague in Ankara, Melih Gökçek, is in a similar situation.

More puzzling perhaps than the attitude of the state institutions, whose tendency to try and impose their point of

view from the top is not new, are the reactions of the educated elite, the people who are generally seen as pro-Western. On the whole, they appear to approve of the army's hands-on attitude to

"Turkey has been standing in one place for so long that it gives the impression of slipping back" — diplomat in Turkey

politics and the crackdown on political Islam. This goes not just for the rich business circles, who could perhaps benefit from the more stable economic environment that a strong government would provide, but also for intellectuals, leftists and unionists, people who were themselves often unjustly harassed, imprisoned or tortured in a not so distant past.

Words like "democracy" and "human rights" are still spoken daily by politicians, officials and officers alike, but their meaning here appears to fit less and less with their definition in the West. The military themselves are firmly convinced they are acting to protect democracy. At the last National Security Council, on March 27, the generals

apparently asked Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, who had caused a diplomatic incident with Germany by accusing the Bonn government of pursuing a policy of "Lebensraum" similar to that of Nazi Germany, to tone down his criticism of the Europeans. But the military don't seem to see that their daily interference in the political process in itself contravenes the

Copenhagen criteria set by the EU, according to which armies have to be under the control of the civilian government, and is therefore an obstacle to integration.

Anger at Europe

In foreign policy too, Turkey is becoming increasingly shrill in its pronouncements. Despite being chastised by the army, Mesut Yilmaz had another go at Germany, describing Helmut Kohl as "my new enemy" and accusing Bonn of having slammed the European door in Turkey's face. As the EU began its talks with prospective candidates, including Cyprus, Ankara once again demonstrated its anger and bitterness at being left out of the Luxembourg process.

Foreign Minister Ismail Cem used strong language, warning the EU and the Greek Cypriots that their talks constituted "the first step towards escalation in the eastern Mediterranean, which can be dangerous." He also mentioned the risk of "another war in the island." Later a foreign ministry official con-

firmed that Turkey and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus could "totally unite" to protect the Turkish presence on the island.

These threats and accusations, combined with the recent rounding up of Kurdish politicians and the harsh anti-Islamist measures ordered by the army, are not helping Turkey mend fences with its European partners.

The picture on the political scene does not give much hope for rapid improvement either. Faced with loud calls for early elections, the three partners in the coalition met on April 2 to devise their strategy and emerged after a few hours to announce that the government would not seek to go to the polls until 1999. This may well be wishful thinking.

Deniz Baykal, the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), which is currently king-maker in parliament, insists on elections this autumn. Other crises with the military may also be looming: the government has submitted several draft laws to parliament that will increase sentences or make it easier to prosecute "reactionaries."

But given the strong conservative element in the assembly, including in the ruling party ANAP, there may well be resistance and demands for amendments, in which case parliament could end up face-to-face with the military.

— Middle East International

Words like "democracy" and "human rights" are still spoken daily by politicians, officials and officers alike, but their meaning here appears to fit less and less with their definition in the West.

LETTERS

To the editor:

the latest format.

C.V. Prevatte
 USA

IT IS so wonderful to hear from one's own country. Hopefully your newspaper will always continue its charitable ways, of going to the trouble to publish articles on the Internet for any Jordanian separated by distance to read. Jordan is a country of such diversity and promise, with peoples of all races, Palestinian, Circassian, Jordanian, and religions, Muslim and Christians all living in such harmony.

Al Hassan Hleileh
 Harrow on the Hill,
 Bradby's House
 U.K.

To the editor:

LONG LIVE hard-working people.

JUST WANTED to tell you that I applaud your efforts as you continue to improve the Internet version of the Jordan Times. I read it nearly every day and am impressed with

Stacie Christen
 USA

To the editor:

G. Hishmeh
 Washington, D.C.

To the editor:

Great new look on your site! You are to be congratulated. It is now easier than ever to enjoy the Jordan Times. May you have even more success!

S. Cassidy
 USA

To the editor:

Congratulations on the new look of the electronic Jordan Times — and thanks for continuing to make it available to those of us interested in a comprehensive look at daily events in the Middle East.

Mary E. Morris
 Morris & Morris Middle East
 Consultants

Insti girl'

By Hind-Lara Mango

by Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — In 1992 a comparative study of basic education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was published. The study found that the region's education system was in a state of crisis. It was characterized by low levels of enrolment, high levels of drop-out, and a curriculum that was out of touch with the needs of the region.

The study also found that the region's education system was characterized by a lack of quality. The curriculum was outdated, the teaching methods were traditional, and the teachers were poorly trained. The study called for a comprehensive reform of the education system, including the curriculum, the teaching methods, and the training of teachers.

The study also found that the region's education system was characterized by a lack of equity. The quality of education was lower for girls than for boys, and for children from poor families than for children from rich families. The study called for a comprehensive reform of the education system, including the curriculum, the teaching methods, and the training of teachers.

May Day, may is going

By Brian Brown

THE MAY Day observances have a long history, and judging by the way workers have celebrated around the world, they are getting pretty good. Countries around the world were hit by violent demonstrations, strikes, and marches. Germany, Turkey, and Korea, even Switzerland, among others, were particularly affected.

The only country that didn't witness a strike of this sort was the U.S., which, as the wisdom of Labour Day at the end of August and besides, "May Day" is not a holiday here. The day was celebrated more with the distress call "A-Team" call out before safety drills.

The major confrontation in Germany took place in Leipzig, formerly part of East Germany, and pitted about 10,000 neo-Nazi police force of thousands to "protect" the marchers. Dozens of leftists were injured by the police for trying to break through the march. Later that day, other wild leftists trashed parts of the city.

Conditions in the former eastern part of the country aren't looking too well. Unemployment is high, the region isn't doing in on the prosperity that has fallen on the western areas, and costs are rising. Neo-Nazis, in a replay of the past, are taking advantage of these conditions to their advantage by having a field day recruiting young, unemployed, and gullible people to fill their ranks.

There is one problem: Nazism and fascism associated with it, using their own words, are still a threat. Everyone knows what's about, and they are certainly enjoying breaking this law, while the neo-fascists are upholding the law are laughing them, and thus, are accessories to the crime.

Not well versed in the German penal system, but it apparently includes references to legal action — such as assault, disorderly conduct, and vandalism — what most of the leftists being arrested were involved in. One group, whose track record includes such minor infractions as getting into a fight with a police officer, were arrested for their activities while others are being away by the dozen for their activities.

There were similar actions in Istanbul, Turkey, featuring leftists versus the police, and resulting in injuries and mass arrests. But the Turkish police, unlike their counterparts, are to be commended for their arrest and beat people equally. Islamists, right-wingers, trade unionists wearing the hijab, they are all targets. A fine photograph from the action.

Seminar begins examining privatisation, restructuring industrial sector in Arab World

including the U.S. and eastern Asia, to start

Dr. Majali also inspected the facilities for travellers at the border post.

He called on Arab countries to encourage the bri-

to generate \$2 billion in foreign investments between 1997-2000 through the pri-

"Arab states should take what happened in Asian countries as a lesson to be more cautious in reviewing their future economic policies and the performance of their financial markets," he said.

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

AMTMAN (Retiree) Industry, Trade, and Sup.

Dr. Mulki requested Mr. Sharansky to lift the barriers facing the exportation of Jordanian cement to the Palestinian areas.

Dr. Mulki, pointing that Jordan has surplus of this material which the Pales-

that the Israeli minister welcomed the Jordanian intention.

telecommunications companies showed interest in launching investments in the kingdom.

Peanuts

Panel 1: Charlie Brown: "APRIL FOOL!" Lucy: "YOU DON'T SAY 'APRIL FOOL' UNTIL YOU SAY SOMETHING ELSE FIRST.."

Panel 2: Charlie Brown: "WHAT SHOULD I SAY?" Lucy: "SAY ANYTHING YOU WANT"

Panel 3: Charlie Brown is silent.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown: "THIS IS TOO HARD.." Lucy is reading a newspaper.

Andy Capp

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HELLO, THERE, MISTER CAPP?

HELLO, SON. LONG TIME NO SEE—DYER FANCY ONE?

OKAY, MIND YOI, I'M NOT A PUB MAN. PRIMARILY, I ONLY HAVE A DRINK TO BE SOCIABLE HOW ABOUT YOU?

PRIMARILY, I ONLY HAVE A DRINK TO GET SLOSHED

BBE

ALES

11 40

Mutt 'n Jeff

JEFF, DO EXACTLY AS THE LAWYER SAYS. WE'RE SAVING FOR FIVE HUNDRED BACKS BUT WE'RE LUCKY IF WE GET FIFTY BACKS. I'VE GOT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU. SAY, "NO?"

NO!

HOW DIDN'T IT TELL YOU WE'RE AT—

NO!

WASN'T YOUR DAD DAMAGED BEFORE THIS ACCIDENT?

NO!

YOUR HONOR, MR. JENNY AND I HAVE DECIDED TO SAVE THE COURTS TIME! I'LL SETTLE WITH JEFF FOR THE FULL AMOUNT!

OK?

WE AGREE TO SETTLE! HERE IS YOUR AMOUNT!

NO!

DO YOU MEAN TO SAY—

NO!

???

NO!

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

products when you shower? I'm still using the same bar of soap I bought in 1973!"

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.


IMECH


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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrison

The Intersection
is a hazard


We'll vote
for it





INGARD



NOOTIL



WHAT THE
VILLAGE BOARD
GAVE THE STOP
SIGN PROPOSAL.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's | Jumbles: MAXIM FORTY ORIGIN FROLIC

Answer: Where employees who bought company

Daily

A review of news

Committee to consider an between government and

A COMMITTEE from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Industry and the Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) has been formed to formulate a draft agreement that would amend the concession agreement with the government. JPRC Board Chairman Abdul Majeed Shoman told the general assembly. The amendment would include the company's operations on pure commercial basis. The concession does no longer meet today's requirements and the current period in light of economic and investment strategy followed by the Kingdom at present.

Mr Shoman indicated that the JPRC has engaged the U.S. company M W Kellogg to conduct an intensive study to speed the size of the expansion needed to meet the obligations required under the concession agreement. The act stipulates that the refinery suffice the Kingdom its need of petroleum derivatives until 2008, the end of the concession period.

As to the dispute between the company and the government over the profit level, Mr Shoman said a solution was reached between the two parties. Instead of demanding the payment of JD50 million covering the period from 1983 until 1990, both sides agreed that the JPRC should only settle JD18 million for the years 1991-1995. The government and the company specified the net after-tax profit at JD5 million and, consequently, the financial dispute between the two sides was completely settled, according to Mr Shoman.

The general assembly, for its part, approved distributing JD5 million in cash dividends at a rate of 16 per cent of

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
US Dollar	-	1.7802	2.5001	1.48
DE Mark	0.5617	-	0.3268	2.13
GB Sterling	1.6663	2.9689	-	2.49
CH Franc	0.6714	119.52	0.4827	-
JP Yen	0.0075	1.3363	0.4562	1.11
CA Dollar	0.6971	1.2915	0.4225	1.26
TL Lira	0.0006	1.0125	0.3412	2.38
NL Guilder	0.4983	68.73	0.2969	7.46
FR Franc	0.1576	0.2080	0.1604	34.92

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH
US Dollar	-	0.7090	2.7503	0.377
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2396	3.31
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1891	-	0.166
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.6806	0.3477	-
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0302	1.538
Kuwait Dinar	3.2744	2.3215	12.2908	1.234
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.8211	0.582

Energy		
Oil	Last	previous
Brent	14.67	13.88
at Texas	16.00	15.91
Bonny	14.67	13.88
Dubai	12.90	12.48
U.K. gas	158.00	158.00

Currency
SA Riyal
AE Dirham
KW Dinar
BH Dinar
CY Pound

*JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1775	1.1834
DE Mark	0.396	0.398
CH Franc	0.4733	0.4757
FR Franc	0.1181	0.1187
JP Yen	0.5305	0.5332
NL Guilder	0.3515	0.3534
IT Lira	0.4014	0.4034

Source: Comex

Bourse	Index	Value
NewYork	DOW JONES	2780.2
NewYork	S&P 500	1128.82
London	FT-SE 100	3048.3
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	15001.1
Paris	CAC 40	3974.25
Frankfurt	DAX	8314.86

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Orthodoxi, Jazireh vie for championship title tonight

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jazireh rewrote basketball records last year when they ended a 30-year drought to win the First Division Basketball Championship.

The question fans and officials are unsure about is can they keep the trophy this year?

The 1998 championship comes to an end tonight when current leaders Al Orthodoxi face Al Jazireh in the match that will decide the champion.

Despite Al Orthodoxi's current lead, a win by any score by both teams would guarantee the trophy as both teams are tied in scoring average in their matches.

Al Orthodoxi were the only team to beat Al Jazireh twice 73-69 in the preliminaries and 65-61 in the first playoff match. They therefore have +8 points but Al

Jazireh's only win over Al Orthodoxi, 92-84 in the preliminary round, gave them also +8 points, therefore tying the score difference.

Al Orthodoxi, who finished third last year, showed an impressive form throughout their matches and had an easier path when they eliminated rivals Al Ahli from the top two positions.

Al Orthodoxi beat Al Ahli 74-49 and 69-37 in the preliminaries and 84-61 and 82-61 in playoffs, while Al Jazireh beat Al Ahli 75-69, and 57-53 in the preliminaries and 78-63 and 57-43 in the playoffs.

Al Jazireh are just out of a week-long training camp in Irbid and coach Fadi Sabbah

was reported saying that he was "satisfied with the team's physical and mental preparedness."

Al Orthodoxi coach Murad Barakat declined comment saying "we are ready."

Al Orthodoxi who held on to the title with an undisputed reign from 1976-1989 before conceding the title to Al Ahli who were champions in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996. Last season's runner up Al Ahli finished third this season with an incomplete line-up showing the effects of inadequate pre-season training. The team's inconsistent form forced them to rely on

the individual efforts of Faisal Nsour and Yousef Zaghoul.

In addition their bench was depleted throughout the playoffs with Mohammad Shamali and Marwan Ma'touq both nursing injuries, and centre Ramez Hammoudeh quitting the team for personal reasons.

Al Ahli came in fourth, Al Jeel fifth and Al Hussein sixth but remained in the first division after the Jordan Basketball Federation scrapped relegation this year to increase the number of teams to eight.

Tonight's match will be held at 6:15 p.m. at the Sports Palace and will be televised live on JTV.

PLAYOFF STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sr	Sa	Pts
Orthodoxi	13	12	1	1068	721	25
Jazireh	13	11	2	1086	753	24
Ahli	14	6	8	900	907	20

Arsenal show style and steel to clinch title

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal won the English League title for the first time in seven years in style on Sunday with a crushing 4-0 win over Everton in front of their own fans at Highbury.

The victory, courtesy of two goals by Marc Overmars, one from skipper Tony Adams and an own goal by Croatian defender Slaven Bilic, puts the Gunners an unassailable seven points clear of defending Premiership champions Manchester United with just two games remaining.

While the 38,000 fans packed into Highbury erupted into wild celebrations at the final whistle, Everton were left contemplating a possible future in the first division.

The result leaves the Merseyside giants, one of the so-called 'Big Five' clubs in English football, in the third relegation place one point adrift of Bolton with one match left to play.

Everton rarely threatened a confident, slick Arsenal side who recorded a Premiership record 10th consecutive win to clinch the greatest prize in English football which the north London club last won in 1991 under George Graham.

Ian Wright, Arsenal's record goalscorer, completed a perfect day for the Arsenal fans when he came on as a second half substitute after a four-month lay-off through injury.

But Wright was upstaged by long-serving Highbury hero Adams, who sealed the rout with a stunning strike two minutes from time.

Gunners boss Arsene Wenger said winning the title was the most satisfying moment in his whole career.

"Professionally it is certainly the biggest moment because it is not easy to come to England to win the championship," said the Frenchman, who has previously won titles in his own country as coach of Monaco.

"The star this season was every player — and that means the team spirit."

Wenger said the turning point of the season came when Arsenal beat Manchester United 1-0 at Old Trafford on March 14.

"We had some difficult moments in November and December so it became very difficult for us," he said.



Arsenal's captain Tony Adams holds up the Premier League trophy after his team defeated Everton 4-0 to take the title (Reuters photo)

"We played first for Europe, for a Champions' League place and I think the turning point was when we won at Manchester United. We believe we could win it if we won our games."

"I think the difference at the end was in the two confrontations with Manchester United."

Arsenal defender Lee Dixon, a title winner with the Gunners in 1989 and 1991, said: "It is a brilliant feeling. This team is just phenomenal — especially the boys in the midfield who have been superb."

It was a first League title for 31-year-old England centre-back Martin Keown, who admitted: "I thought it was never going to come."

"It was an incredible run we put together. Manchester United set the standard and we went after them."

Overmars added: "It is absolutely great. My first year and we have won the Premiership."

Highbury erupted after five minutes as Arsenal grabbed the vital opening goal — and Bilic was left hanging his head in despair.

Emmanuel Petit, the Premiership player of the month for April, swept over a

corner from the left and Bilic, under pressure from Arsenal captain Tony Adams at the far post, headed the ball into the back of the net attempting to clear.

The Gunners scored a second just before the half hour mark to all but wrap up their 11th ever league title with a brilliant individual goal by Overmars.

The Dutch winger burst forward from the halfway mark, accelerating clear of the Everton defence before cutting into the area and firing a low shot which Myhre got a hand to but could not stop from squeezing over the line.

Overmars struck again 12 minutes after the interval with another blinding run and clinical finish.

Once again the Merseysiders had no answer to the Dutchman's electric pace as he raced 40 yards towards goal before cutting a neat shot across the goal-mouth into the far right corner.

Adams, who has bounced back from a rash of personal problems including alcoholism, completed his remarkable recovery by scoring Arsenal's fourth with a thundering left foot drive from the edge of the area.

Sampras claims Atlanta crown

ATLANTA (AFP) — Top-seeded Pete Sampras snapped his four-year title drought on clay by holding off second seed Jason Stoltenberg 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) in the final of ATP event here Sunday.

It was a second tour title of the season for Sampras, who regained the world's number-one ranking from Chile's Marcelo Rios this week. It was also his 54th career tournament triumph for the American who pocketed a winner's cheque of \$45,000.

The 27-year-old Sampras last won a title on clay at Rome in 1994, his last appearance in a claycourt final until Sunday. His only other claycourt crown came at Kitzbuhel, Austria in 1992.

Sampras did reach the final here in 1991, losing to Andre Agassi.

Overcoming 15 aces by Stoltenberg, Sampras managed to capitalize on just two of 16 break point opportunities, also taking advantage of 13 double faults by the Aussie. Sampras won on his first match point to survive the two-hour, 40-minute duel.

Although he struggled throughout the week, Sampras continued his recent success in finals, as he improved to 11-1 in his last 12 finals, including a victory at the Advanta Championships in Philadelphia in February. His only loss in a final during this streak came against Agassi in the final of the Sybase Open in San Jose, California, in February.

In addition, he upped his record to 19-1 lifetime in finals against players ranked outside the Top 20. Stoltenberg is currently ranked 42nd in the world.

The 28-year-old Stoltenberg suffered his second straight loss in the final at this event, and third loss in an ATP Tour final this year.

Stoltenberg, who lost to Marcelo Filippini in last year's final, also posted runner-up finishes at Adelaide, Australia, and Scottsdale, Arizona, earlier this year.

The Aussie was seeking his fifth career ATP Tour title and first since last year at Coral

Jordan rallies Chicago for victory Jazz eliminate Rockets; Knicks advance

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Another struggle and another Michael Jordan explosion added up to another victory for Chicago Sunday, over Charlotte in Game One of their National Basketball Association second-round series.

Jordan had 35 points and 11 rebounds as the Bulls overcame a 15-point deficit and shut down the Charlotte Hornets 83-70 to take a 1-0 lead in their best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series.

The match-up in Chicago opened the second round of the playoffs, but first there was some first-round business to complete.

At Salt Lake City, the brute strength of Karl Malone and Greg Ostertag overpowered the aging Houston Rockets and carried the Jazz into the Western Conference semi-finals.

Malone scored 31 points on 12-of-22 shooting and led every key surge. He scored the first two baskets of the game as Utah got off to a quick start and never trailed.

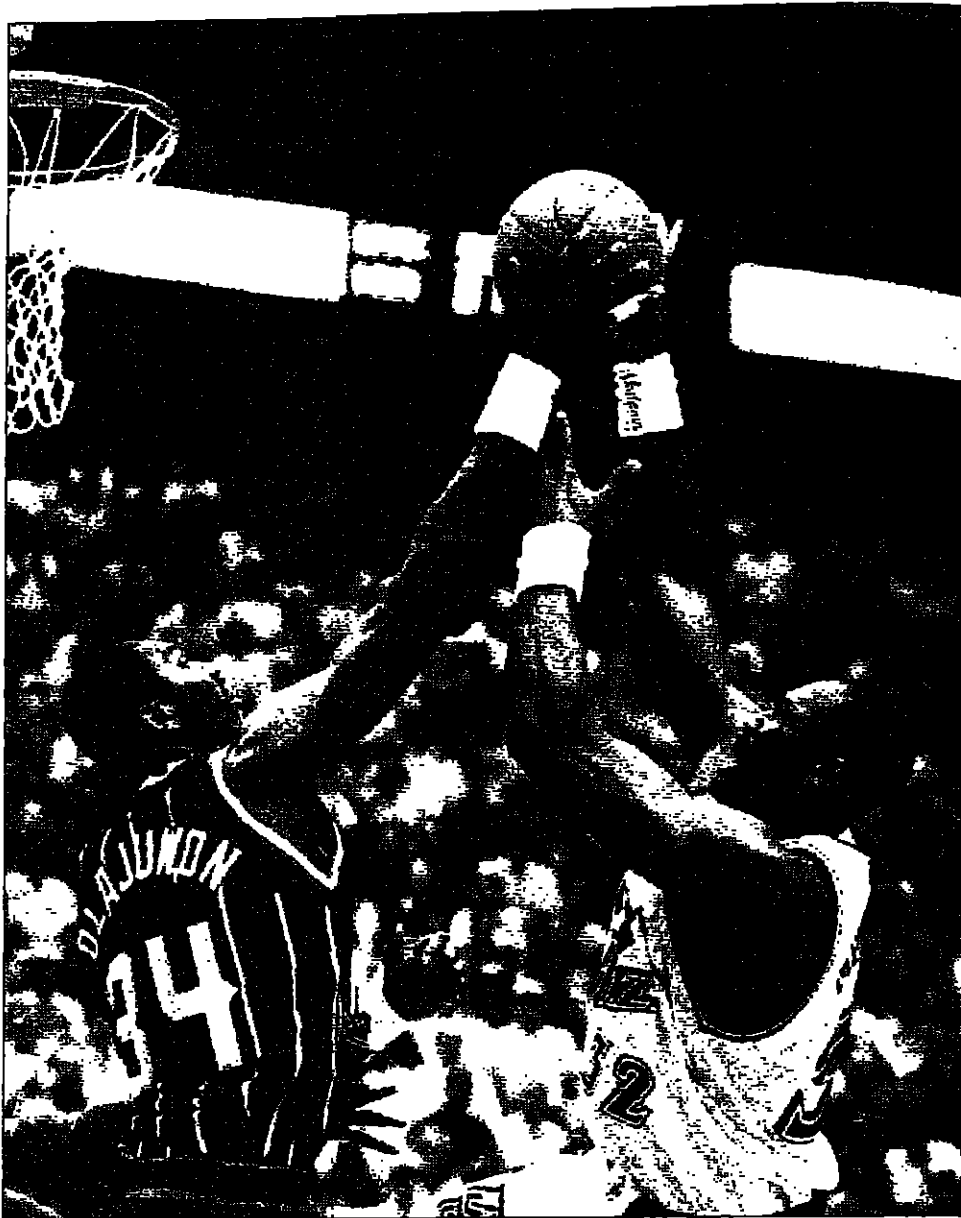
Ostertag scored six points, all in the fourth quarter. He added five rebounds and seven blocks and helped contain Hakeem Olajuwon, who again shot poorly and scored 15 points.

Jeff Hornacek added 15 points for Utah, which battled back from a 2-1 series deficit and eliminated Houston for the second straight year. They'll meet San Antonio in the second round.

In Miami, the Knicks made do without suspended Larry Johnson and Chris Mills, leading from start to finish in a 98-81 victory over the Heat in the deciding Game Five of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Houston led the way with 30 points, including 20 in the second half. Starks had 22 points, including five three-pointers.

Tim Hardaway, who lit up the Knicks for 38 points in last year's Game Seven victory, sparked Miami with 18 points in the second half after scoring just three



Houston Rockets center Hakeem Olajuwon (L) gets a hand on the ball as Utah Jazz forward Karl Malone (R) goes up for a shot during the fourth quarter of their NBA playoff game. Malone scored a game high 31 points to help the Jazz get past the Rockets 84-70. The Jazz won the best-of-five series 3-2 (Reuters photo)

points in the first half.

But it was not enough to offset the performances of Houston and Starks, or the absence of teammate Alonzo Mourning, also suspended after trading ineffectual punches with Johnson in an embarrassing melee at the end of Game Four.

Johnson will also miss New York's second-round opener against Indiana.

Chicago, the defending champions who were the only team to sweep their first-round opponents 3-0, got off to a shaky start and trailed 23-15 after one quarter.

After being outscored by

counterpart Bobby Phillips in the first period, however, Jordan came alive. Relying less on his jumper than usual, Jordan led surges in the second and third quarters that gave the Bulls control. He also held Phillips scoreless after the opening period.

Scottie Pippen scored 25 points and Dennis Rodman pulled down 14 rebounds and totally outplayed Anthony Mason as the Bulls stayed unbeaten in the playoffs. Game Two is Wednesday at Chicago.

Although the two-time defending champions swept the New Jersey Nets in the

first round, they wasted a 14-point fourth-quarter lead in the opener and were pushed to overtime before rallying behind Jordan, who scored 39 points.

Glen Rice scored 25 points but shot poorly for the Hornets, who managed just 25 points in the middle two quarters and threatened the NBA all-time playoff low five days after matching it against the Atlanta Hawks.

Charlotte eliminated Atlanta in four games to advance to the conference semi-finals for the first time in five years.

Hingis beats Novotna to win German title

HAMBURG (AP) — Top-ranked Martina Hingis gave herself a boost before the French Open by beating Jana Novotna 6-3, 7-5 in the final of the German Grand Prix to win her first title on European red clay Sunday.

In the 10 of the past 11 years, at least one of the finalists of this event has also went on to contest the French Open final, and four champions from here also won the title in the only Grand Slam on clay.

Last year, Iva Majoli won here and became the French Open champion later by beating Hingis in the final. It was the only of the four Grand Slam events Hingis failed to win last year.

This year's French Open starts May 25. Hingis, who trailed 4-2 in the second set, rallied to level the score but had trouble to close the match, needing four match points.

"I had to fight for every point, she wasn't giving much away," Hingis said.

The 17-year-old Swiss collected \$79,000 for her victory and leads the WTA Tour with three titles of the year. She has now won 17 titles in a short but brilliant career.

The victory brought her record for 1998 to 25-3.

In a match pitting one of the youngest and one of the oldest players on the tour, Hingis took advantage of two errors by Novotna to win the first set.

Novotna, 29, put a weak volley into the net and then hit a backhand into the net to drop her serve and give Hingis a 5-3 lead.

The Swiss teen-ager won the set with a backhand volley.

With rain clouds gathering over the center

court, tournament officials quickly pulled over the retractable roof and Novotna started playing better, going a break up.

"The balls got heavier and she started playing better," Hingis said.

"It was difficult to win points against her today, she got a lot of balls back," she said.

"I tried to fight and make the points shorter," Hingis said.

A volley that took a strange bounce off the line helped Hingis get back into the match by tying at 4-4.

"When I was up, that's when it became more difficult for me," Novotna said. "She became more aggressive, she hit harder. When you are up, that's when she steps up and raises her game."

"Her consistency in her ground strokes and her ability to keep me behind made the difference," said Novotna, a Czech who was seeded second and who is No. 3 in the world.

"She doesn't make many mistakes, no double faults, you don't get any easy points," Novotna said.

Hingis, who now holds a 6-2 career edge over Novotna, beat the Czech only once before on clay, three years ago in the same tournament.

Hingis was 14 then and it was her first victory over a top 10 player.

Meligeni wins Czech Open

PRAGUE (AFP) — Fernando Meligeni of Brazil won the \$365,000 Czech Open ATP Tour event here on Sunday, beating local favourite Slava Dosedel of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-4 to pocket a winners cheque for \$48,200 and 150 ranking points.

In a match delayed for three hours because of heavy rain on the Svanecek arena's centre court it was the Brazilian who adapted himself to the conditions the better as he constantly drove back his opponent with a series of powerful top-spin returns.

Although generally better known as a doubles player, it was left-hander Meligeni's third Tour victory in all, but his first this year.

Dosedel was again hampered by the fever which had caused him so much discomfort in Saturday's tough three-set semi-final win over Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador.

And the strain told as 27-year-old Meligeni, who ousted Romania's Dinu Pescariu 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/2), in his semi, raced to a 5-0 lead inside 19 minutes and wrapped up the opening set in 30 minutes.

Betis stay in hunt for Champions League spot

MADRID (AFP) — Betis stayed in the hunt for a Champions League spot after a 1-1 draw with Real Madrid Sunday.

The Andalusian side, who finished second in the league last year, drew 1-1 with Real Madrid in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie.

Betis, who are currently in third place in the league, will face Real Madrid in the second leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

The draw was a relief for Betis, who had been in danger of being relegated to the second division.

Betis manager Manuel Pellegrini said: "We are very happy with the result. We have a chance to stay in the first division."

Real Madrid, who are currently in fourth place in the league, will face Barcelona in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Barcelona, who are currently in first place in the league, will face Bayern Munich in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Bayern Munich, who are currently in second place in the league, will face Juventus in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Juventus, who are currently in third place in the league, will face Lazio in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Lazio, who are currently in fourth place in the league, will face Fiorentina in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Fiorentina, who are currently in fifth place in the league, will face Inter Milan in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Inter Milan, who are currently in sixth place in the league, will face AC Milan in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

AC Milan, who are currently in seventh place in the league, will face Chelsea in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Chelsea, who are currently in eighth place in the league, will face Arsenal in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Arsenal, who are currently in ninth place in the league, will face Manchester United in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Manchester United, who are currently in 10th place in the league, will face Liverpool in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Liverpool, who are currently in 11th place in the league, will face Tottenham Hotspur in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.

Tottenham Hotspur, who are currently in 12th place in the league, will face Newcastle United in the first leg of their UEFA Cup tie on Wednesday.



Chicago Bulls player Michael Jordan.

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Chicago Bulls player Michael Jordan.

Betis stay in hunt for Champions League spot

MADRID (AFP) — Betis stayed in the hunt for Champions League spot next season as two goals from Nigerian striker Finidi George brought a 3-1 win at champions Barcelona on Sunday.

Barca wrapped up the title last month and are a mammoth 13 points ahead of second-placed Athletic Bilbao.

And the Catalan club, who had earlier taken the lead through Dutchman Winston Bogarde, appeared none too disconcerted at their eighth defeat of the campaign.

But the big question now is whether European Cup finalists Real Madrid will see runners up spot elude them.

Real host Zaragoza on Monday knowing that if they lose the final showdown to Juventus later this month they could well miss out altogether on Europe's premier club competition next year.

Bilbao hammered Real Oviedo 3-0 to go a point clear of Real on 61 points but having played a game more, while Real Sociedad, Mallorca and Betis are all locked on 59 points and can still take second spot with two games left.



Chicago White Sox Ray Durham dives to catch a short fly ball hit by Anaheim Angels Garrett Anderson for the out in the third inning in Anaheim, Ca. Durham's catch ended the inning. The White Sox won 12-1 (Reuters photo)

Hingis returns to scene of breakthrough — Italian Open

ROME (AP) — It was in Rome two years ago that Martina Hingis made her breakthrough. Then 15 years old, she ousted top-ranked Steffi Graf in the quarterfinals of the Italian Open in the biggest win of her short career.

Now she's back as the World's No. 1 women's player, fresh off a tournament victory in Germany and with a sizzling match record of 25-3 this year.

And in a clear sign of the generational change in women's tennis, Graf, the dominant player over the last decade but lately hobbled by injuries, is seriously considering retiring.

Hingis heads the field in

the \$926,000 Italian Open that began play Monday, the major clay court test before the French Open, the only Grand Slam played on the slow surface.

The draw is the strongest in the tournament's history, with 18 of the top 20 players entered. The top eight seeds received a first round bye.

Sisters Venus and Serena Williams are featured in opening day matchups. Venus, the No. 9 seed, faced Yayuk Basuki, while the younger Serena followed on center court against No. 11 Nathalie Tauziat.

Hingis, who missed the Italian Open because of injury last year, returns on the heels of a 6-3, 7-5 victory

over Jana Novotna in Hamburg. It was her third tournament title this year — the most on the tour — and her first on European red clay.

She enters as a strong favorite, but faces a strong group of veterans — Novotna, Amanda Coetzer, Mary Pierce, Arantxa Sanchez.

Vicario. Conchita Martinez, whose run of four consecutive Italian titles was stopped by Pierce last year, is also back.

Just behind them are a group of talented players of Hingis' generation, including Anna Kournikova, the Williams sisters and Mirjana Lucic, who won a

title Sunday in her native Croatia.

Organisers had hoped that Graf, off the tour since March because of an injured hamstring, would play. But the German announced over the weekend that she would skip Rome and the French Open.

Graf has been trying to come back from reconstructive surgery on her left knee. The former No. 1 player has slipped to No. 33 in the rankings.

"I've come to the point where I can clearly see the end of my career," she told the German magazine Focus.

SCOREBOARD

National League	
Florida	1
San Francisco	12
Montreal	4
Philadelphia	5
Los Angeles	10
NY Mets	5
Cincinnati	5
St Louis	8

San Diego	0
Atlanta	8
Arizona	1
Houston	3
Pittsburgh	5
Colorado	2
Milwaukee	3
Chicago Cubs	5

American League	
Boston	2
Cleveland	10
Baltimore	2
NY Yankees	10
Toronto	6
Seattle	10
White Sox	12

Texas	1
Tampa Bay	8
Minnesota	0
Kansas City	1
Oakland	3
Detroit	6
Anaheim	1

NBA playoffs	
First Round (series best-of-five)	
Eastern Conference	
New York	98
Miami	81

(New York win series 3-2)	
Western Conference	
Utah	84
Houston	70
(Utah win series 3-2)	
Second Round (series best-of-seven)	
Chicago	83
Charlotte	70
(Chicago lead series 1-0)	

Spanish Championship	
Sporting Gijon	0
Real Sociedad	2
Majorca	2
Atletico Madrid	1
R. Santander	1
Espanyol	1
Celta Vigo	3
Compostela	3
Athletic Bilbao	3
Real Oviedo	0
Tenerife	2
Salamanca	0
Real Valladolid	0
Merida	0
Barcelona	1
Real Betis	3

Atlanta ATP Tour	
Final	
Pete Sampras (USA x1) bt Jason Stoltenberg (Aus x2)	
6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4)	

Juventus put the champagne on ice

MILAN (AFP) — Juventus moved closer to their 25th league championship on Sunday, when the Italian league leaders and their title rivals Inter Milan both clocked up 0-0 draws.

Juventus had plenty of possession but failed to make it count at Vicenza, whose Pasquale Luiso was unlucky not to snatch a winner.

Inter were held by Piacenza, their first 0-0 of the season coming despite the one-way traffic at San Siro, and they failed to narrow a four-point gap on Juventus with just two matches left.

Inter's failure to score means that Juventus will now be putting the champagne on ice, ready to be opened next weekend when they should be crowned champions against Bologna.

Ronaldo hit the post and Inter's Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu failed to put away the easiest of rebounds in the 24th minute, while Argentine Diego Simeone also hit the woodwork soon after the re-start.

It was disappointing for Inter's goalkeeping coach Luciano Castellini, who stood in for Gigi Simoni and deputy coach Sergio Pini, both suspended after last week's con-

troverial defeat to Juventus.

"We tried everything we could, but they were defending tooth and nail," Castellini said. "And their goalkeeper made some great saves."

Further down the Serie A, Udinese, Parma and AS Roma have all booked their places in next season's UEFA Cup.

Udinese swept to a 3-1 win over Napoli which also kept their German ace Oliver Bierhoff top of the Serie A scoring charts with 25 goals.

Paolo Poggi struck in the fourth minute, but Napoli's talented young striker Claudio Bellucci was felled in the area barely 10 minutes later and Francesco Turrini converted the penalty.

However, Bierhoff then added a brace from close range, one just before the break and one just before the end.

"We're now third in the table and that's extremely important for us," said coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

"Now we've got to defend that position, because for a young, provincial team like

Udinese it's something extraordinary."

Parma drew 2-2 with 10-man Sampdoria, who had midfielder Marco Franceschetti sent off in the first half.

Enrico Chiesa opened the scoring against his old club with a superb free-kick but Brazilian striker Paco equalised for Sampdoria.

Argentinian Nestor Sensini put Parma back in front only for Frenchman Alain Boghossian to level with a bullet header from an 87th corner.

AS Roma had no difficulty crushing a defenceless AC Milan 5-0.

Just four days after AC Milan lost the Italian Cup final by conceding three goals in 10 minutes against Lazio, they let in another three in just 13 minutes against Roma at the same Olympic stadium.

Frenchman Vincent Candela smacked the ball home from 20 metres in the 16th minute and Francesco Di Biagio quickly added two more, one a penalty and the other a superb left-footed

drive.

Brazilian Paulo Sergio sneaked through to make it 4-0 and Marco Delvecchio nodded in the fifth, as Milan coach Fabio Capello surely reflected on his decision last summer to leave European Cup finalists Real Madrid.

Capello, who was wooed back to Milan by club president Silvio Berlusconi, held a press conference which lasted all of 10 seconds.

"I'd like to personally apologise to the fans and to Mr. Berlusconi. I am ashamed," he said.

The odds on Roberto Baggio making the World Cup finals continued to shorten after he won and converted a 14th minute penalty — his 19th goal of the season — that set Bologna on their way to a 2-0 lead over Empoli.

Michele Parmatti nodded home a corner, but Carmine Esposito pulled one back just before the break for Empoli and Massimiliano Capellini converted a penalty in the third minute of injury time to make it 2-2.

It was a miserable day for relegation strugglers Brescia, who sacked coach Paolo Ferrario in the morning and went a goal down after just 17 seconds to Fiorentina in the afternoon — before losing 5-1.

Argentinian skipper Gabriel Batistuta slotted home the goal after rounding the keeper and more came from Belgian international Luis Oliveira.

Brazilian ace Edmundo, Batistuta's 20th of the season — a superb chip after being picked out by Edmundo — and Swede Stefan Schwarz.

The win kept Fiorentina on course for Italy's last UEFA Cup slot, and Brescia, whose striker Dario Hubner notched his 16th of the season, on course for the Serie B next season.

Atalanta kept alive their hopes of avoiding the drop by beating Bari 2-0. Lazio, relaxing between cup finals, lost 1-0 to Lecce on Saturday. They face Inter Milan next week for the UEFA Cup in Paris.

Enqvist outlasts Agassi for BMW title

MUNICH, Germany (AP) — Thomas Enqvist slowed down Andre Agassi's surge back to the top ranks by coming from behind to beat the American in three sets for the BMW Open title Sunday.

Enqvist, a Swede who is also on a comeback after overcoming a series of nagging injuries, won 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 in a close match that could have gone Agassi's way as well.

"I've never played so well on clay before," Enqvist said.

Agassi was seeking his first tournament victory on European red clay in 10 years and his third title of the year.

"We both played very well during the whole match," Agassi said. "I was improving all the time during the week and it was a perfect preparation for the French Open."

"It's disappointing not to win but all in all, it was a good week. I am not too far

from my best. I am very pleased to have been here this week," Agassi said.

Enqvist, who was seeded seventh, collected \$70,000 for his win.

Agassi, who was eighth-seeded in the \$500,000 tournament, will move one place to No. 19 in the rankings. Enqvist slipped one place past Agassi to No. 18.

Once the No. 1 in the world, Agassi had dropped as low as No. 141 during a disastrous season last year.

"Both of us played extremely well. It's always fun to play him," Enqvist said. "Perhaps I had more luck in the second set."

Enqvist, 24, has now won 13 of his 15 career finals and clinched his second title of the year, after Marseille.

Agassi saved two break points in the 11th game of the second set, before it went to the tiebreak. A forehand winner gave Enqvist the set, although Agassi had been two points away from the title.

The final set saw four breaks of serve in the first four games.

A powerful hitter from the baseline, Enqvist gained a key break of serve with four tremendous returns for a 5-3 lead in the final set and served out the match.

Following a good serve, Enqvist hit a crisp backhand volley that gave Agassi no chance and won after two hours and 15 minutes. He now leads Agassi 3-2 in career showdowns.

Agassi, 28, will now return home to Las Vegas and still has not decided whether he will play the Italian Open that starts a week from Monday.

"I don't know yet. If I go, it'll be good me, but if I don't it won't be too bad. I hope to be seeded for the French Open," he said.

The French Open, the highlight of the European clay-court season, is the only Grand Slam tournament Agassi has never won.

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مكتبة لأمجد

Bailey breezes through

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Canadian 100-metres world record holder Donovan Bailey breezed home in 10.19 seconds in the season-opening IAAF Grand Prix meeting here on Sunday, beating compatriot Bruny Surin by three hundredths of a second.

Vicent Henderson of the United States was third in 10.27 at the Celio Barros Stadium at the Maracana sports complex.

Algeria's 1,500 metres world record holder Noureddine Morelci was also too strong for his opponents at that distance, winning in 3min 34.99sec ahead of Kenya's David Lelie, who timed 3:36.24 with Algerian Ali Said-Siet third in 3:37.97.

Holbrooke: Cyprus talks reach 'serious impasse'

NICOSIA (AFP) — U.S. presidential envoy to Cyprus Richard Holbrooke said here on Monday that efforts to revive negotiations between the Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot communities had reached a "serious impasse."

"I don't consider this a crisis. I don't consider it a catastrophe," the special envoy for Cyprus of U.S. President Bill Clinton told a press conference at the end of a four-day visit to the divided Mediterranean island.

Refusing to characterise his visit as a "failure," Mr. Holbrooke acknowledged, however, that the talks had reached "a temporary impasse but a serious one."

"I consider the problems we encountered part of the process and we will remain committed," he said, adding later to AFP that "American disengagement could lead to an escalation of the problem, to a growth in tension."

He said preconditions imposed by Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş had led to the current deadlock in efforts to promote reunification talks between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities.

"Two positions that one side took... [are] making meaningful, substantive exchange extremely difficult at this point," he said, although he stressed he did not "wish to leave the impression that all the problems are on one side."

Mr. Denktaş was insisting on recognition for his breakaway Turkish Republic of

Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which was declared in 1983, and withdrawal of Cyprus's application for membership in the European Union (EU), Mr. Holbrooke said.

"[Denktaş] said that henceforth he does not wish to negotiate the future of the island unless he and his representatives are recognised as a sovereign state," he said.

The United States and other nations do not recognise the TRNC, which is recognised only by Turkey, which has 35,000 troops on the Turkish-occupied northern part of the island.

Mr. Holbrooke described as "unrealistic" the demand that Cyprus withdraw its application to join the EU and placed blame for the current deadlock on the EU decision not to open membership talks with Turkey.

"The European Union was correct in inviting Cyprus to begin talks to join the European Union," he said.

"And they were wrong not to invite Turkey to begin in the process as well."

"And it is that imbalance which I believe has led to the present impasse," he said.

A Cypriot government spokesman, Christos Stylianides, blamed the deadlock on "Turkish intransigence."

"Due to the intransigence of the Turkish side unfortunately efforts to resume the dialogue between the two communities have failed," he said.

"The international community should realise that the Turkish side is exclusively responsible for the absence of progress."

Mr. Denktaş on Monday reiterated his demand for recognition for the TRNC and said the Holbrooke mission had revealed the deep rift between the sides.

"The only proposal made to us by Mr. Holbrooke was for us to sit down at the negotiation table, after which we would become two states," he said. "This is an illusion."

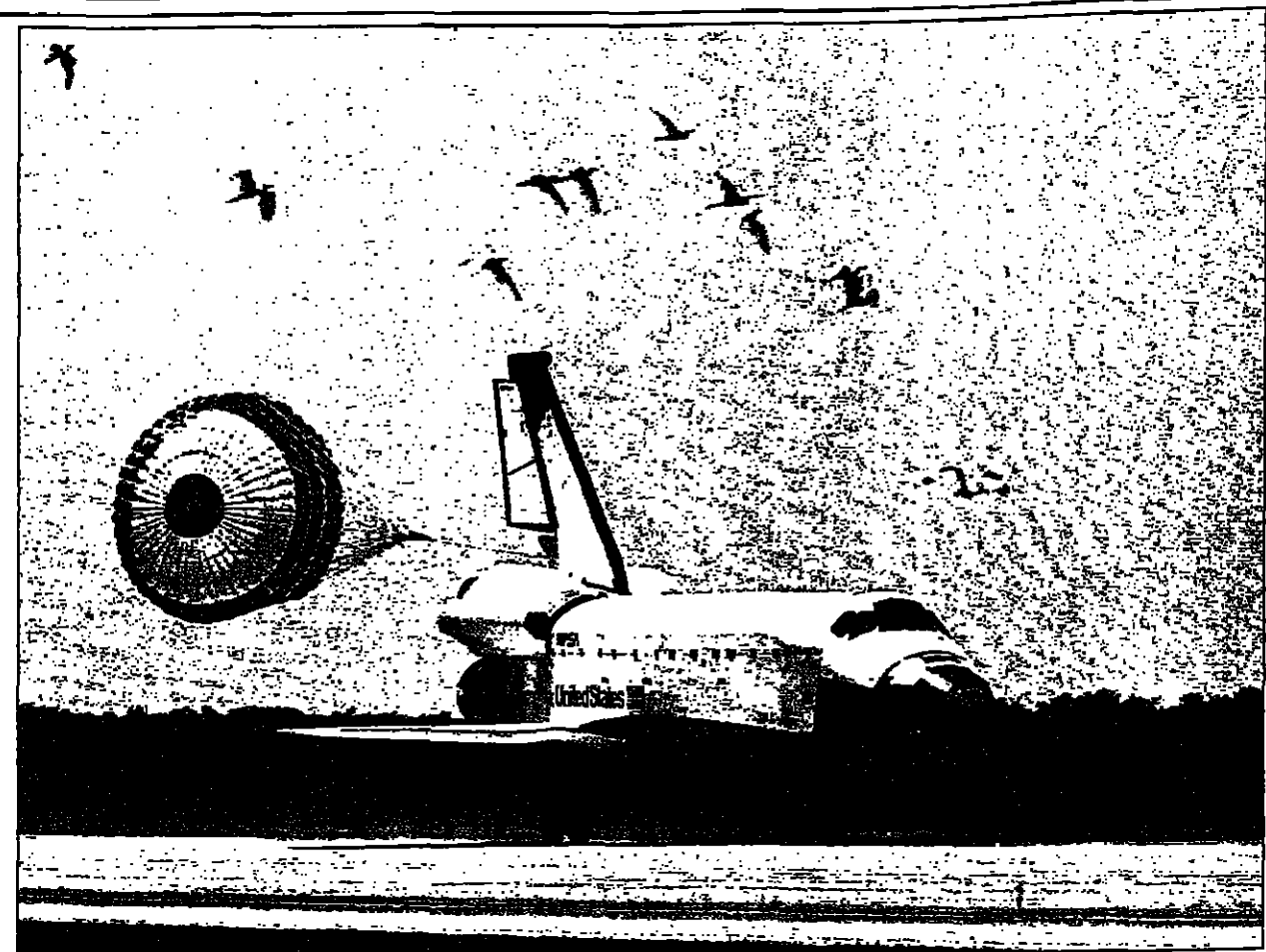
The U.S. emissary said Thomas Miller, the U.S. State Department coordinator for Cyprus, would return here at the end of May and he personally would "come back anytime I can be useful and that both sides want me."

"The United States and Ambassador Tom Miller and myself will remain engaged and available to help the parties reach that long overdue solution," he said.

Mr. Holbrooke said there had been no progress on demilitarisation issues or on easing the tensions raised by the planned purchase of sophisticated S-300 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia by the government of Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides, a Greek-Cypriot.

On a positive note, the U.S. envoy attended the inauguration on Monday of expanded telephone links between the Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot sides of the island.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkey occupied its northern third in response to a Greek-Cypriot coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.



7 PEOPLE, 2000 CREATURES BACK ON EARTH: The space shuttle Columbia touches down at the Kennedy Space Centre Sunday, ending a 16-day mission as the drag parachute is deployed. Columbia's crew of seven and more than 2,000 creatures, including mice, rats, fish, snails and crickets, served as test subjects for the shuttle's \$99 million study of the brain and nervous system (Reuters photo)

Arab League urges end to clan fighting in Somalia

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Monday urged rival Somali factions to observe an immediate ceasefire in their battling which has claimed dozens of lives and "complicated" efforts to restore stability in the country.

The Somali National Front (SNF), dominated by members of the Marehan clan, have been fighting militiamen loyal to Mohammed Said Hirsi "Morgan," warlord of the Indian Ocean Port of Kismayo, where the fighting is raging.

Arab League assistant secretary general for Arab affairs, Ahmed Ben Heli, called on the two groups "to observe an immediate ceasefire in Kismayo."

"These factions will bear full responsibility for the fighting and for complicating the situation given that they are among the Somali factions who signed the December Cairo Declaration on peace," he told reporters.

Mr. Milo, who will leave the ruling Likud Party to make his bid, said the impetus behind his decision to run came from the religious interference in a performance celebrating Israel's 50th anniversary last week.

Ultra-Orthodox politicians objected to a scantily-clad modern dance piece set to the tune of a religious song and insisted that the dancers cover up, triggering a walkout by the Basheva troupe minutes before the show started.

"The religious censorship, which was applied by an extremist religious segment on the Basheva performance, was a crisis point in the development of the state of Israel," Mr. Milo told a press conference.

"My aim is to neutralise the leverage of religious extremists which is used today by a group which is not large but enjoys great political power,"

Mr. Milo, a veteran of five Israeli parliaments as a lawmaker from Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, has also held the police, environment and welfare portfolios in previous Israeli cabinets.

In November 1993, Mr. Milo was elected as mayor of Tel Aviv.

Haim Ramon, a senior figure in the opposition Labour Party, said the secular public is split more or less evenly between the Labour and Likud. He said Mr. Milo's entry into the premier's race could force a runoff.

"It is the beginning of the 'big bang,'" Mr. Ramon said on Israel army radio. "Much of the public wants to see a new party. There is discomfort with both of the big parties among a very wide spectrum of the public."

Yossi Sarid, leader of the liberal Meretz Party, warned that a new political faction could boost Mr. Netanyahu's chances for reelection.

Mr. Milo did not name his new party and said its members would include many new faces to Israeli politics as well as present members of both the Likud and Labour parties.

Emphasising the need for internal unity and mutual tolerance, Mr. Milo had little to say on Mideast peacemaking except to say he believed a settlement could be reached with the Palestinians.

Former Mossad official sets up peace tent at Netanyahu's house

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The former deputy chief of the Mossad spy agency has set up a "peace tent" outside the official residence of Benjamin Netanyahu, saying Monday he hoped to encourage the Israeli prime minister to advance stalled negotiations with the Palestinians.

David Kimche, who also served as the director general of the Israeli foreign ministry in the early 1990s, urged Mr. Netanyahu to be flexible in talks Monday in London with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on efforts to break the deadlock in peace negotiations.

A large sign outside the tent across the street from Mr. Netanyahu's residence in central Jerusalem read, "May you depart peacefully and return with peace."

"I call this a peace tent, not a protest tent," Mr. Kimche told Israel Radio. "We have to advance in peace because the alternative could be very, very grave... a return to hate, violence and bloodshed, which no one wants."

"We want to encourage the prime minister to show him that a large majority of the Israeli public wants him to return [from London] with peace and to advance in the peace process," Mr. Kimche added.

Meanwhile, leaders of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories and nationalist members of Israel's governing coalition agreed over the weekend to work to topple the government if Mr. Netanyahu agreed to give in to the U.S. demands, the Maariv newspaper reported Monday.

Those involved in the threat reportedly included leaders of the National Religious Party, which accounts for nine of the Netanyahu coalition's 61 seats in the 120-member parliament.

Some settler leaders said Monday that they would hold protest demonstrations throughout the country if Mr. Netanyahu agreed to any further withdrawal from the West Bank.

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Tel Aviv mayor announces he is running for prime minister

TEL AVIV (AP) — Vowing to reduce the power of "religious extremists," Mayor Roni Milo announced Monday that he would run against Israeli Benjamin Netanyahu for prime minister in 2000.

Mr. Milo, who will leave the ruling Likud Party to make his bid, said the impetus behind his decision to run came from the religious interference in a performance celebrating Israel's 50th anniversary last week.

Ultra-Orthodox politicians objected to a scantily-clad modern dance piece set to the tune of a religious song and insisted that the dancers cover up, triggering a walkout by the Basheva troupe minutes before the show started.

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'This baseball' is a good game — Fergie

CHICAGO (AP) — It wasn't quite cricket, so don't blame Fergie for being a bit in the dark. Sarah Ferguson, Britain's Duchess of York, passed on a chance to lead Chicago Cubs fans in the traditional rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" during the seventh inning. But it wasn't because of snootiness or stage fright. "I don't know the words," she said, laughing. Ferguson, making her first visit to an American baseball park, agreed to stand in the press booth with announcer Steve Stone and wave to fans during the song. She also said she enjoyed the game known as America's pastime. "It's a good game, this baseball. I like it," she said.

Clinton at star-studded fund-raiser

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — President Bill Clinton joined actor Michael Douglas and DreamWorks film studio co-founder Jeffrey Katzenberg at a glitzy, \$10,000-per-couple dinner in Hollywood Sunday. The political fund-raiser was expected to generate about \$1 million for the president's Democratic Party. Film director Oliver Stone and actors Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen were among the stars at the event. Unable to attend but still writing checks were actor Tom Cruise and his wife, actress Nicole Kidman, organisers said.

Good movie roles hard to get — Bacall

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Lauren Bacall may have been nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe last year, but she says good movie roles are hard to come by these days. "They are not writing wonderful parts for women," she said in Los Angeles Times. "That is the sad truth. They were certainly not breaking down the doors for me, anyway," Bacall, 73, won acclaim for "The Mirror Has Two Faces." She'll make a two-episode guest appearance on television's "Chicago Hope" beginning this week, playing a wealthy artist with a brain tumour. The part is worthwhile because "it's not a stereotype," she said. "I am not playing somebody's mother or somebody's aunt."

Kermit & Co. to build environmental awareness

BATON ROUGE (AP) — Harry Connick Jr., Aaron Neville, chef Paul Prudhomme and Kermit the Frog are teaming up to build environmental awareness about the problems Louisiana has with coastal erosion. The state loses 65 to 90 square-kilometre of coastline a year, which bothers Kermit because he has thousands of cousins living in coastal swamps, bayous and marshes. "For all of us who are lower on the food chain, we thank you" for helping save the wetlands, Kermit says in one of the 30-second public service announcements to air on television.

Chelsea's boyfriend spotted at church

PALO ALTO (AFP) — A tall, clean-cut young man spotted at Chelsea Clinton's side during a church service here Sunday has been romantically linked to the 18-year-old First Daughter. Chelsea, her first year of studies at Stanford University drawing to a close, is dating the young man, a fellow Stanford student, ABC News said. The young man with chiselled features and an athletic build was Matthew Pierce, 20, a third-year student majoring in religious studies from a suburb of Dallas, Texas, ABC said, citing Stanford University sources.

U.S. invites Netanyahu to Washington

LONDON (AFP) — The United States threw the Middle East peace process a dose of new life Tuesday as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met in London. The U.S. State Department said it was pleased to see progress on the final stage of Israeli troop withdrawals.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who led the talks, said President Bill Clinton was pleased to see progress on the final stage of Israeli troop withdrawals.

Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Tuesday agreed to a tough new deadline for Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Netanyahu said the agreement was a "significant step" towards a final peace agreement. He said the agreement was a "significant step" towards a final peace agreement.

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Egypt creates own 'Nobel prize'

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian parliament created an annual national prize Monday, in honour of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's 70th birthday, to reward Egyptians for creative work in five fields.

"The parliament unanimously adopted the bill to create the Mubarak prize, which beginning this year will disburse a total of [\$180,000] to reward creativity in literature, art, social sciences, science and high technology," parliamentary officials said.

The winners of the annual prizes, the most important awarded by the government, will each get \$29,400.

The Mubarak prize was proposed by businessman Mohammad Abul Enein, one of 10 parliamentarians appointed by the president.

Mr. Mubarak's National Democratic Party, which has a large parliamentary majority, has scheduled a cultural festival for Monday night in honour of his birthday.

The president himself is spending his birthday Monday with his family, as he always does, a source close to the Egyptian presidency said.

Mr. Mubarak became president after Anwar Sadat was assassinated in 1981 and is the longest-serving president since Egypt became a republic in 1953. He is also its oldest president.

Mr. Mubarak's third consecutive mandate ends in October 1999.

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Sudanese archbishop charged over failure to pay aid debt

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan's Roman Catholic archbishop was arrested and then freed on bail over the failure of a national relief agency, which he heads, to pay a contracting company, a judicial source said on Monday.

Archbishop Gabriel Zubair Wako, who is in charge of Sudan Aid, was detained on Friday for 24 hours because the charity has yet to pay the Sudanese trading firm Abu Huzafah more than \$660,000 for food the latter supplied in 1988 to 1990.

The source said that Sudan Aid was in breach of a ruling made in December by a court in Khartoum's twin city Omdurman, but stressed that the case was "a civil court dispute and has no political or religious implications."

Sudan has for 15 years been gripped by civil war between the forces of Khartoum, where an Islamist-backed junta currently rules, and rebels from the mainly Christian and traditionalist south.

Freed on bail, Archbishop Wako on Sunday left Khartoum for Kenya's capital Nairobi where the rival sides were on Monday due to resume peace negotiations suspended last November, though observers and indeed the government itself have said there is little prospect of a settlement emerging from the talks.

Sudan Aid owes the Abu Huzafah firm \$662,945 or its equivalent in the local currency, the pound, and was unable to get the Omdurman civil court ruling overturned when it first went to the appeal court and then to a tribunal of five judges set up by the chief justice.

Under the initial ruling, the Omdurman court ordered the freezing of Sudan Aid's accounts with Citibank and the seizure of the relief agency's vehicles.

The source said that the court ordered Archbishop Wako's arrest after being informed by police that Sudan Aid personnel had "resisted" the taking away of the vehicles.

A Roman Catholic church source told AFP that Archbishop Wako had gone to Nairobi to attend the talks between the government and southern rebels of the SPLA.

But the diplomat noticed them and quickly drove away. They fired at his vehicle, but he escaped injury, the agency said.

Iran's embassy was preparing to protest to the Pakistani authorities, it added.

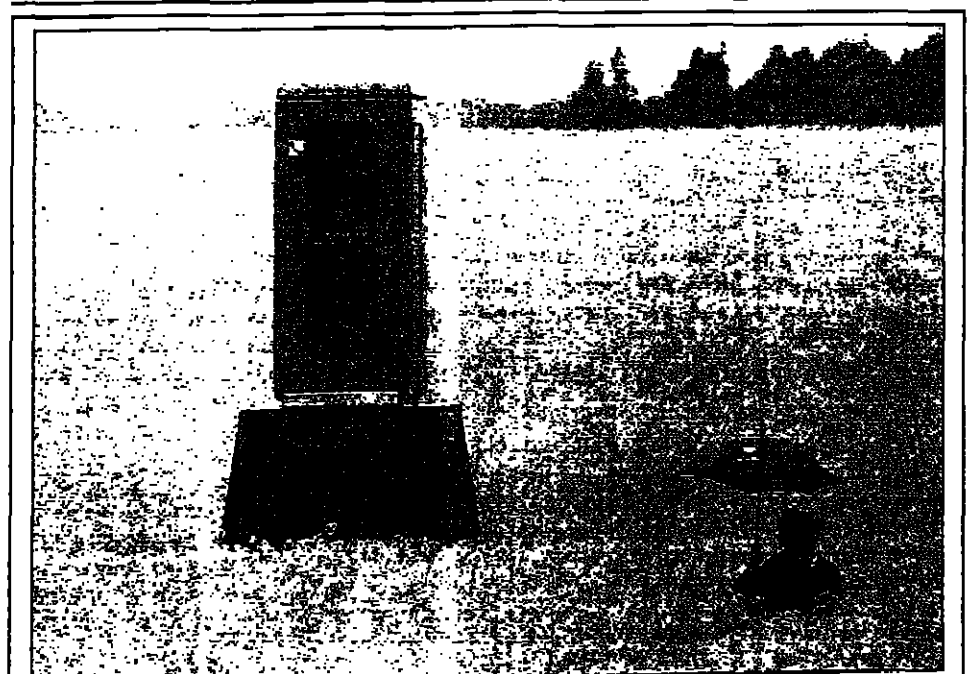
The incident was the latest in a string of terrorist attacks against Iranian nationals, including diplomats, in Pakistan.

In February, two Iranian construction engineers were gunned down by unidentified gunmen in the port city of Karachi, south of Pakistan.

Last month, two people accused of killing five Iranian air force cadets in Pakistan last year were sentenced to death by an anti-terrorist court.

Iran has blamed the group Sipah-e-Sahabah of Pakistan for attacks on its nationals in recent years.

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A WORK OF ART: Olaf Richardson walks with an umbrella through a rapefield with a telephone booth in Korvin, Lower Saxony, Germany, on Monday. What appears to be telephone service for agricultural workers is actually a project by German artist Strehlow, titled "Komm 1998". The project subject is communication. Richardson is the friend of artist Mona Strehlow and walks through the field to control the telephone booth (AP Photo)

Arafat: Netanyahu not respecting acco

RABAT (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Tuesday that Netanyahu was "not respecting acco-

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